Letters of the Great Kings of the Ancient Near East

The Royal Correspondence of the Late Bronze Age

Trevor Bryce


مصر في عيون المرشد السياحي
مكتبة المرشد السياحي الضخمة

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AA	*Archäologischer Anzeiger*
AfO	*Archiv für Orientforschung*
ÄHK	Edel, E. (1994) *Die Ägyptische-hethitische Korrespondenz aus Boghazköi,* vol. I, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag
ÄHK II	Edel, E. (1994) *Die Ägyptische-hethitische Korrespondenz aus Boghazköi,* vol. II, Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AoF	*Altorientalische Forschungen*
AS	*Anatolian Studies*
BiOr	*Bibliotheca Orientalis*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CTH	Laroche, E. (1971) *Catalogue des textes hittites,* Paris: Klincksieck
DS	Güterbock, H.G. (1956) 'The deeds of Suppiluliuma as told by his Son, Mursili II', *JCS* 10:41–68, 75–98, 101–130
EA	*The El-Amarna Letters,* most recently ed. W.Moran (1992)
HKM	Alp, S. (1991b) *Hethitische Keilschrifttafeln aus Maşat-Höyük,* Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Basimevi
JCS	*Journal of Cuneiform Studies*
JEA	*Journal of Egyptian Archaeology*
JEOL	*Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*
KBo	*Keilschrifttexte aus Boghazköi*
KUB	*Keilschrift Urkunden aus Boghazköi*
MDAIK	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Kairo*
MDOG	*Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft*
MIO	*Mitteilungen des Instituts für Orientforschung*
MsK	*Texts from Meskene* (Emar)

PRU IV	Nougayrol, J. (1956) *Le Palais royal d'Ugarit IV* (Mission de Ras Shamra Tome IX), Paris: Klincksieck
RAss	*Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*
RS	Tablets from Ras Shamra
SMEA	*Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici*
StBoT	*Studien zu den Boğazköy-Texten*
TUAT	*Text aus der Umwelt des Alten Testament*
UF	*Ugarit-Forschungen*
Urk	*Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums*, Leipzig and Berlin, 1906–58
WVDOG	*Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichung der Deutscher Orient-Gesellschaft*
ZA	*Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie*



Map 1 The Near East in the Late Bronze Age

COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF THE GREAT KINGS

	ASSYRIA	BABYLON	EGYPT	HATTI	MITANNI
1800	Shamshi-Adad		*Middle*	*Assyrian*	
		Hammurabi			
	Ishme-Dagan			*Colony*	
				Period	
1750		Samsu-iluna			
	minor			*obscure*	
			Kingdom		
		3 kings			
1700				*period*	
				Labarna	
1650	*kings*		*Second*	Hattusili I	
		Samsu-ditana		Mursili I	
			Intermediate		
1600		*early*		Hantili I	
			Period		
				3 kings	
1550	*minor*		Ahmose		
			Amenhotep I	Telipinu	
		Kassite			
			Tuthmosis I		*early kings*
1500					
			Tuthmosis II		Parattarna
			Hatshepsut &		
			Tuthmosis III*	*5 kings*	
					3 kings?
1450	*kings*	*kings*			
			Amenhotep II		Shaushtatar
				Muwatalli I	Artatama I
1400			Tuthmosis IV	Tudhaliya I/II	
			Amenhotep III	Arnuwanda I	Shuttarna II
		Kadashman-Enlil I		Tudhaliya III	
					Artashumara
	Ashur-uballit	Burnaburiash II			Tuchratta
1350			Akhenaten**	Suppiluliuma I	
		2 kings	Tutankhamun		Shattiwaza
	2 kings		Ay	Mursili II	
			Horemheb		
1300	Adad-nirari I		Ramesses I Seti I	Muwatalli II	Shattuara I
		Kadashman-Turgu	Ramesses II		Wasashatta
				Urhi-Teshub	
	Shalmaneser I	Kadashman Enlil II		Hattusili III	Shattuara II
1250		*2 kings*			
	Tukulti-Ninurta I	Kashtiliash IV		Tudhaliya IV	
		7 kings			
			Merneptah		
			5 kings	Arnuwanda III	
1200	*2 kings*			Suppiluliuma II	
	Enlil-kudurri-usur		Ramesses III		
		Enlil-nadin-ahi	Ramesses IV		
1150					

‘Effective rule begins after Hatshepsut’s death in 1458. **Possible period of co-regency with Amenhotep III.

INTRODUCTION

The region we refer to loosely—and from certain perspectives quite inappropriately—as the Near East is today occupied by a large complex of states, from Turkey in the west to Iraq in the east, and from Syria southwards through Lebanon, Israel and Jordan to the eastern fringes of the Peninsula of Sinai. Our study of the ancient Near Eastern world extends also to Egypt, for the kingdom which arose in the land of the Nile developed close political and commercial links with this world, and came to exercise a profound influence on its history during the second millennium BCE. Cyprus too played a role in Near Eastern affairs, as to a lesser extent did Mycenaean Greece—thus adding further elements to our study of international relations in the period under review.

This period, the so-called Late Bronze Age, covered some 500 years, roughly from the early seventeenth to the early twelfth century BCE. It saw the rise of a number of Great Kingdoms, whose rulers between them controlled almost the entire region. Such control was neither easily won nor easily maintained. Even today, with all the advantages of modern communications and formidable arsenals of weapons, it is virtually impossible for any great power to impose lasting control over any part of the Near Eastern complex. How much more difficult the task must have been, we might reasonably assume, for the ancient kings of the region.

During the Bronze Age, effective means of communication were as essential to the maintenance of political and military control over a particular group of territories as they were to the development of international trading links, upon which a kingdom's prosperity and very survival might largely depend. And effective communication depended on unobstructed travel by land or by sea. The logistics and risks of such travel in the ancient Near East could be daunting. Journeys often involved vast distances by ancient standards, whether undertaken by merchants, royal messengers, diplomatic missions or armies on campaign, and could involve passage through extensive areas of rugged, waterless terrain, on routes infested by bandits and often impassable because of harsh seasonal conditions. Travel by sea was equally, if not more, hazardous, with the ever-present threat of violent storms and attacks by pirates, and few safe havens in long stretches of harbourless coastline.

The complex ethno-political character of the Near Eastern world presented its own set of problems and challenges to potential overlords. The region was home to an array of petty kingdoms, nomadic and semi-nomadic groups, independent communities and aggressive mountain tribes—a wide range of disparate ethnic groups speaking a wide range of languages. Yet throughout the Late Bronze Age this unwieldy, politically and culturally diverse conglomerate was to a very large extent controlled and exploited by four men. Between them, these men exercised sovereignty over almost the entire region. How did they do it?

One of the key elements in their success was their system of regular communication with each other, and their ability to co-operate and resolve contentious issues through diplomacy more often than by brute force. Great Kingdoms and Empires had been built in the past, particularly in Mesopotamia during the third and early second millennia (i.e. in the Early and Middle Bronze Ages). But they had proved short-lived, for their rulers had failed to appreciate the complexities and the sheer logistics of the task of administering widespread subject territories won by force, or the merits of reaching an accommodation with the rulers of rival powers who sought to establish their own dominance in the region. The possibility of peaceful co-existence based on negotiated settlements between two or more Great Kings, along with an agreed apportionment of subject territories between them, seems never to have been seriously entertained before the Late Bronze Age.

Five major kingdoms emerged in this age: the kingdom of Hatti, with its homeland in central Anatolia, the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni in Upper Mesopotamia and northern Syria, the kingdom of Assyria in northern Mesopotamia, coming once more into prominence after the collapse of Mitanni in the fourteenth century, the Kassite kingdom of Babylon in southern Mesopotamia, and the kingdom of Egypt, once more resurgent under a line of native rulers after the expulsion of the Hyksos. For much of the Late Bronze Age control of the Near Eastern world was apportioned between four of these kingdoms, with Assyria replacing Mitanni in the second half of this period.

Their rulers constituted what has been referred to as an elite and exclusive club.[1] They were styled 'Great Kings', addressed each other as 'My Brother' and were in regular diplomatic contact with each other. In some respects they were little better than glorified warlords, and from time to time throughout the Late Bronze Age wars flared between them. But *Realpolitik* often prevailed over more narrowly based military ambitions. More could be gained, in terms of both a king's personal prestige and the power and prosperity of his kingdom, by forming an alliance with a powerful rival than by forcing a military showdown with him. The region was big enough for a Great King to satisfy realistic territorial ambitions, and peaceful interaction with his peers offered many benefits in terms of international trade opportunities and access to sought-after materials from other lands. Moreover, all kings benefited from the greater stability conferred upon the region as a whole by their pacts with their fellow kings. (We shall have more to say about this in Chapter 2.)

The essential underpinning of the Great Kings' relations with each other was the diplomatic communications which passed between them—above all the letters which they exchanged. It is particularly in these documents that we see the process of Near Eastern international diplomacy at work. But some surprises and disappointments may be in store. On a first reading the letters offer little that might be considered uplifting or statesmanlike. Their authors seem much more concerned with complaining about apparent trifles—the paltriness of a royal brother's gifts, the lack of courtesy shown to a royal brother's envoys, or the failure to send a message of sympathy to a royal brother who had fallen ill. Such complaints may appear petty, at least to our way of thinking, but, as we shall see, they have a significance which goes beyond mere pettiness, for they highlight a number of matters of procedure and protocol whose correct observance was so important to the agreements negotiated and the alliances established in the world of international diplomacy.

The letters also provide us with some interesting insights into the actual personalities of many of those in whose hands the destinies of the Near Eastern world lay. They reveal aspects of their characters which by their very nature never surface in their public monuments and documents. And in several respects they bring us as close as we can possibly get to the actual time in which their authors lived. Above all, they enable us to reconstruct the period as *they* saw it, through *their* perceptions and reactions.

As a student I once had the task of reading a number of Cicero's works, primarily as source material for an assignment I had been set on the last decades of the Roman Republic. The Roman statesman's speeches were obviously a valuable source of information, but it was only after reading the *letters* written by him to his friends and associates, and vice versa, that I gained a clear sense of what the political atmosphere of Rome must have been like in those politically turbulent days. To read first-hand accounts of what was happening in Rome—*as* it was happening—by those directly involved in the intrigues and faction disputes and street violence conveyed much more effectively a sense of being part of it all, of observing events as they were actually unfolding, than the most graphic of the speeches. So too the letters from the Late Bronze Age enable us to put together first-hand accounts of events in the Near Eastern world, in some cases observing them through each stage of their unfolding. Such accounts, a record of events told by the actual participants in them *as they happened*, can have far greater impact than a record of the same events made by a third party in retrospect, sometimes long after the story has run its full course.

Of course letters are but one of a number of sources of information on which we draw in reconstructing a history of the ancient Near Eastern world. And we need to take full account of all such sources in order to provide as balanced and reliable a picture as possible of the various kingdoms which constituted this world. This I attempted to do in my history of the Hittite kingdom.[2] Yet in writing this history I became increasingly interested in the prospect of devoting a book entirely to the correspondence of the broader world in which the Hittite

kingdom arose. There are many fascinating stories which the letters have to tell, may fascinating insights which they provide. Unfortunately these can only be touched upon lightly in a general history, which must draw upon a wide range of sources without giving undue attention to any of them at the expense of others. Hence came about the idea which has led to this book.

Some of the letters already dealt with in my history and my subsequent book on Hittite society[3] will appear again here, though this time they will be treated in fuller detail and placed more firmly within the context of events in the Near Eastern world in general, as well as within the genre of the royal correspondence of the period. It is almost superfluous to use the word 'royal' in this context, since almost all the surviving letters of the period were sent to or from a king or other members of his family, or to or from a member of the palace bureaucracy. That is a reflection of the fact that practically all surviving documents inscribed on clay, including letters, have been unearthed in official archives. Of course the number of literate persons outside the ranks of the state bureaucracy was likely to be extremely small. Hence, what we find in the official archives probably does provide us with a genuinely representative sample of the range and type of all correspondence produced in this period. But voluminous though the quantity of preserved letters appears to be, they must represent only a tiny fraction of those that were actually written. Fortunately we know the contents of many letters which have not survived from passages quoted verbatim from them in the responses which their recipients made to the senders. We shall say more about this in Chapter 3.

Two further observations might be made on the survival of the texts. First, it will soon become clear to the reader that letters to and from the courts of Egypt and Hatti figure most prominently in the correspondence dealt with in this book. To a large extent that is a reflection of what has been found. The largest quantities of letters known to us from the period are those that have been unearthed in Egyptian and Hittite archives, and also in the archives of the lesser kingdoms like Ugarit which had particularly close ties with Egypt or Hatti or both. Aside from this, there is no doubt that during the second half of the Late Bronze Age, the period to which most of the letters belong, Egypt and Hatti dominated the international scene. It should therefore be no surprise that they appear to have played a more prominent role in the network of international communications and diplomatic exchanges than did the other Great Kingdoms which enjoyed theoretical parity with them. Of course, we must always make allowance in drawing any such conclusions for the possible distortions of chance survival.

Second, there is a very good prospect that tablet archives with large numbers of letters will continue to surface in the years to come. The important recent finds of archives at sites like Ugarit and Emar, and within the Hittite homeland at the sites of (modern) Maşat, Ortaköy and Kuşakli give high hopes that further excavations within the Near Eastern region will bring other such archives to light. But to date, by far the most important collection of international correspondence is still one of the earliest to be discovered, the tablets that came

to light at El Amarna in Egypt in 1887. Given the frequency with which this archive will be referred to in the following pages and its central importance to Late Bronze Age international diplomacy, I have provided a brief summary of its overall nature and contents in the Appendix.

A number of different approaches might be taken in dealing with the royal correspondence. The conceptual and thematic approach adopted, in the excellent set of essays on the Amarna letters edited by Cohen and Westbrook (2000) provides one example. In the approach I have adopted the emphasis will be primarily on the people of the letters and the stories which the letters have to tell. In some cases these stories may already be well known—like that of the widowed Egyptian queen who sought a Hittite prince as her new husband. Yet, as the letters which she wrote are amongst the best-known pieces of correspondence from the ancient world, they can hardly be omitted from any representative account of the correspondence of the age in which they were written. Other letters dealt with in this book will be less well known, particularly those that have only recently been published. Other letters again still await publication, like those included in the rich cache of over 3,000 tablets recently unearthed at the site of Sapinuwa (modern Ortaköy) in the Hittite homeland. These and other unpublished letters will be referred to briefly in the pages which follow. More detailed treatment of them must await a later edition of this book.

Yet even a book wholly dedicated to the letters of the Late Bronze Age can give no more than a small sample of the material available to us, and provide no more than a few snippets of those letters which have been singled out for discussion. This book serves merely as a starting-point. My hope is that the brief account it gives of the royal correspondence of the Late Bronze Age will prompt those who read it to venture much further into one of our most intriguing sources of information on the history and civilization of the ancient Near East in one of its most fascinating periods.

The translations

The following pages contain numerous short excerpts in translation from the letters we shall be considering. Translations by other scholars are acknowledged in the appropriate endnotes. (All translations by Moran come from his 1992 edition of the Amarna letters.) In some instances the translations have been modified, as indicated by the insertion of the words 'after' or 'adapted from' before the translator's name. These modifications are in no way intended as a reflection on the accuracy of the original translations. Rather, they have been made for minor stylistic reasons. There are occasions when the original text is fragmentary and the restorations made by a translator are conventionally indicated by the use of square brackets. Where there is little or no doubt about the restoration, I have removed the brackets in the modified translations for ease of reading. But where there is significant doubt about a reading or interpretation, I have indicated this either in the translation itself or in its accompanying

endnote. There are also occasions (in extracts where no translator is indicated) where I have given slightly freer renderings of the original texts. But in all these cases, as well as in the modified translations, I have attempted to remain faithful both to the spirit and nuances of the original passages and to their actual content. Even so, it should be stressed that a reader wishing to make a serious study of the texts, if only in translation, should refer directly to the scholarly editions of these texts. The authors of these editions appear in the Bibliography at the end of the book.

Chronology

The chronology of the Middle and Late Bronze Ages remains a much discussed topic, and there are often marked differences in the dates which scholars have proposed for the royal dynasties of the period. A number of Babylonian scholars favour a lower chronology than that used in this book, particularly for the reigns of the Babylonian kings up to the conquest of Babylon by the Hittites.[4] This obviously has implications for Hittite history, whose absolute dates depend largely on synchronisms with Babylon and Egypt. I have adopted what is called a middle chronology in dating the sack of Babylon to *circa* 1595 BCE, and more generally in the dates indicated in the chronological chart (pp. xi) and in Chapter 1 for the kings who reigned in Assyria, Babylon and Hatti during the first half of the second millennium. Scholars supporting the low chronology would lower these dates by a margin of 50 to 100 years. The reader should be aware of these variations, although our primary concern in this book will be with events which took place in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, a period in which differences in opinion over chronology are much less marked.

April 2003

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Notes

1 For a more detailed discussion of the ‘Great Powers club’, see Liverani (2000).
2 Bryce (1998).
3 Bryce (2002).
4 See Gasche *et al*. (1998).

I

SETTING THE SCENE

In preference to the modern term ‘Babylonia’ commonly applied to the kingdom over which the city of Babylon held sway, I have used the city’s name for both capital and kingdom throughout this book. ‘Babylonia’ is also used, but primarily as a convenient geographical designation for the region encompassed by the kingdom.

1
THE MAIN PLAYERS
The five Great Kingdoms

The Late Bronze Age Near East presents us with a complex and ever-changing picture—one of constantly shifting balances of power amongst the major kingdoms, of expanding and contracting spheres of influence, of rapidly changing allegiances and alliances as the Great Kings vied with one another, and sometimes co-operated with one another, to secure their share of power in the region. In our survey of the correspondence of the age, we shall be moving constantly from vassal kingdom to royal capital, and from one royal court to another. That is a challenging enterprise. The complexity of the international scene in the Late Bronze Age may bewilder the reader who has little prior knowledge of the historical developments and political structures which underpinned it. Thus, before we move to the correspondence itself, we should give some attention to the historical and political settings in which the letters were written. This we shall do in our first two chapters, focusing our attention above all on the rise and fall of the five Great Kingdoms whose rulers shared supremacy over the Near Eastern world for periods ranging from 200 years to almost half a millennium. These were the kingdoms of Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, Hatti and Mitanni.[1]

The kingdom of Assyria[2]

The Assyrians figure prominently in the records of the early second millennium as enterprising merchants and traders who established a series of highly successful merchant colonies along the trade routes linking their capital Ashur with the towns and kingdoms of eastern and central Anatolia. We learn of their activities from some 15,000 tablets, the majority of which have come to light in the city of Kanesh (Nesa), where the Anatolian headquarters of the merchant enterprises was located. Kanesh lay on the southern bend of what the Hittites called the Marassantiya river, the Halys river of Classical times (mod. Kizil Irmak). By and large the Assyrian colony period was one of remarkable international co-operation between Assyrians and Anatolians, based on exchanges of commodities for which there were ready markets in the regions where they were traded. Tin and textiles were traded by Assyrian merchants in exchange for Anatolian gold and silver.

The many letters included in the records of the merchants' activities are a testimony to the high level of efficiency and sophistication with which the Assyrians carried out their merchant operations, in spite of the inevitable tensions which they sometimes reflect. There were two main phases to these operations, the first extending from the last quarter of the twentieth century until about the middle of the nineteenth (from the reign of the Assyrian king Erishum I to that of Puzur-Ashur II), the second covering the period from the late nineteenth century until the first half of the eighteenth. Conflicts between and within the Anatolian kingdoms were almost certainly responsible for disrupting the merchant enterprises at the end of the first phase, and for terminating them altogether at the end of the second.[3]

This latter phase is associated with a man of Amorite stock who left his mark in Assyrian history as the greatest of his country's early rulers, and for a time the most powerful figure in the Near Eastern world. The man in question was Shamshi-Adad (1813–1781).[4] After occupying the city of Ekallatum on the Tigris river, Shamshi-Adad won control of the Assyrian capital Ashur, which lay close by on the opposite bank, and then carried his arms westwards. His first main objective was the strategically valuable kingdom of Mari, then ruled by Yahdun-Lim. Located on the west bank of the Euphrates, Mari had imperialist ambitions of its own, which seriously threatened the westward expansion of Assyrian power. Shamshi-Adad met the threat head on, attacking and inflicting a resounding defeat upon Yahdun-Lim's forces. Shortly afterwards, Yahdun-Lim was assassinated. Shamshi-Adad promptly disposed of his successor and seized Mari for himself. With the chief obstacle to his imperialist ambitions now eliminated, he brought the whole of Upper Mesopotamia beneath his sway. Commercial considerations were almost certainly one of the major incentives for Shamshi-Adad's campaigns of conquest, for by these he gained control over the major trade routes linking Ashur with Syria and eastern and central Anatolia.

He took up residence in his newly built capital Shubat-Enlil, and to facilitate the administration of his newly won empire he appointed his sons Ishme-Dagan and Yasmah-Addu as 'kings', in effect viceroys, in Ekallatum and Mari, respectively, with the authority to deal with foreign rulers on equal terms and subject only to their father's overlordship. It was essential to the security of Shamshi-Adad's kingdom that these two cities on the kingdom's most sensitive borders be firmly controlled.[5] The extensive archives of this period which have come to light in Mari, including the correspondence between Shamshi-Adad and his younger son Yasmah-Addu, reveal much about the kingdom's workings. They also reveal much about the relationship between father and son.[6] The latter was subject to numerous paternal remonstrances for his alleged laziness, self-indulgence and failure to apply himself to his kingly duties. Yet both sons appear to have remained unswervingly loyal to their father, and almost certainly could not be held responsible for the kingdom's rapid decline after his death.

As in the case of all other early Near Eastern empires, the task of maintaining control, for an extended period, over the large territories acquired initially by

military force was beyond the capacity of the conquering power. Ultimately the resources required for the effective defence and administration of an empire imposed upon a large assortment of often unwilling subject peoples were more than the conqueror could command. The kingdom built by Shamshi-Adad was under constant threat and challenge from other contemporary powers, as well as from the subject populations within it. A well-known letter of slightly later date, written by an official at Mari, conveys a good impression of the kind of rivalry and power-play that was so marked a feature of the Near Eastern world in the early centuries of the second millennium:

> There is no king who, just by himself, is truly powerful. Ten or fifteen kings follow Hammurabi, lord of Babylon, as many do RimSin, lord of Larsa, as many Ibalpiel, lord of Eshnunna, as many Amutpiel, lord of Qatna. Twenty kings follow Yarim-Lim, the lord of Yamhad (Aleppo).[7]

Shortly after Shamshi-Adad's death his kingdom disintegrated, with the numerous small states over which he had imposed his authority regaining their independence. Around 1760, the final remnants of his empire succumbed to the Babylonian king Hammurabi. Some 170 years later Babylon fell to the Hittites, but its conquest provided little opportunity for an Assyrian resurgence, for the region where Shamshi-Adad had once held sway came to be dominated by the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni. In what must have been one of the lowest points in Assyrian history, the former Great Kingdom's traditional capital Ashur was sacked and looted by the Mitannian king Shaushtatar. Assyria now disappeared almost entirely from the Near Eastern scene. But only for the time being. Its power lay dormant. Even though it had lost its independence, core elements of the kingdom persisted, including the royal dynasty. The latter provided the essential foundation for Assyria's resurgence, which followed closely upon the weakening and ultimate destruction of the Mitannian empire by the Hittites. A new Assyrian king, Ashur-uballit (1353–1318), appeared on the international scene. As Mitannian power yielded to the military might of Hatti, Ashur-uballit established his independence and began taking over parts of former Mitannian territory. He further sought to bolster his international standing by entering into correspondence with the pharaoh, as one Great King to another.

The Hittite king Suppiluliuma viewed with some alarm this outcome of his destruction of Mitanni, and sought to prevent or at least limit the growth of Assyrian power east of the Euphrates by establishing Shattiwaza, the son of his arch-enemy Tushratta, as puppet ruler of a rump Mitannian kingdom. Kassite Babylon no doubt viewed the Assyrian resurgence with even greater alarm. There had been a long tradition of hostility between the neighbouring kingdoms. For some time Hurrian dominance of northern Mesopotamia had relieved Babylon of any serious threat from Assyria. But that dominance was now gone, and the Assyrian menace had re-emerged. The Babylonian king Burnaburiash II (1359–1333) expressed his concerns about this new development in a letter to the

pharaoh.[8] However, tensions between the two kingdoms eased temporarily when a marriage alliance was agreed upon and Ashur-uballit wedded his daughter Muballitat-Sherua to Burnaburiash's son Karaindash. Unfortunately this did not meet with the approval of the Babylonian king's troops, who were far from overjoyed at the prospect of being ruled by a king with Assyrian blood in his veins. And when Karahardash, the son of the couple, assumed the throne he was assassinated by the Kassite militia and replaced by a full-blooded Kassite nonentity called Nazibugash. Furious at this turn of events, Ashur-uballit invaded the Babylonian kingdom and executed the pretender.

Tensions between Assyria and Babylon may again have abated, for a time, when an apparently amicable agreement was reached between the Assyrian king Adad-nirari I (1295–1264) and his Babylonian counterpart over the boundaries separating the two kingdoms. In this same period, the Assyrians had substantial success in consolidating their hold upon the former territories of the Mitannian kingdom east of the Euphrates. Their takeover of territory allied with Hatti was clearly an embarrassment to the Hittites, but it appears to have met with little opposition from them. A much more devastating blow to Hittite military prestige was delivered by Adad-nirari's successor but one, Tukulti-Ninurta I (1233–1197), who decisively defeated a large Hittite army at the battle of Nihriya (which probably lay in the region north or north-east of modern Diyabakir). The prospects for a successful Assyrian invasion of the Hittite subject territories in Syria must now have seemed extremely good. There is little doubt that the Assyrians had long entertained aspirations of gaining direct control of the regions lying between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean coast. They were now in a position where this appeared to be well within their grasp.

Instead, and much to the Hittites' great relief, Tukulti-Ninurta turned his attention southwards—against Babylon. His decision to do so may well have been provoked by an attack on his own territory by the Babylonian king Kashtiliash IV, apparently in breach of the earlier agreement reached during Adad-nirari's reign. Tukulti-Ninurta very likely took the view, with some justification, that he should secure his southern boundaries before risking a major commitment of his military resources against the Hittite territories in Syria. At all events, his campaign against Babylon was resoundingly successful. He made himself overlord of the kingdom and hauled his opponent Kashtiliash back to Ashur in chains.

But Assyrian rule over Babylon was not to last. The extensive commitment of resources needed to maintain control over the vanquished southern kingdom diverted substantial resources away from protecting other Assyrian territories. A major campaign across the Euphrates into Hittite territory was now clearly out of the question. Tukulti-Ninurta's forces suffered several military defeats, and the king eventually fell victim to assassination. It was some fifteen years after his death that a Babylonian king called Adad-shumu-usur (1216–1187), who had come to power in the south of the kingdom, liberated the whole of his country from Assyrian rule, in the process capturing the Assyrian king Enlil-kudurri-usur

(1187–1183). In Assyria conflicts broke out over the succession, and several kings followed one another in short succession.

Yet Assyria was to prove one of the most resilient of the Bronze Age Great Kingdoms. Decades after the Anatolian kingdom of Hatti had disappeared, when Egypt had forever lost its status as a major international power, when Babylon was being ruled by a succession of insignificant dynasties, when Mitanni was but a fleeting memory, Assyria remained a formidable power in the Near East. In the reign of its king Tiglath-Pileser I (1114–1076) it still retained control over a substantial part of northern Mesopotamia. Henceforth it would go from strength to strength, becoming for a time, in the period we call the Assyrian New Kingdom, the most powerful and the most ruthless empire the Near Eastern world had ever seen.

The kingdom of Babylon

When the kings of Sumer held sway over southern Mesopotamia in the third millennium, few could have foreseen that the small township on the east bank of the Euphrates would one day become the centre of one of the most illustrious and influential civilizations of the Near Eastern world. At times it would be devastated by its enemies, at times it would be little more than a weak and obscure appendage of its powerful neighbours. But in a region which saw the dramatic rise and fall of many civilizations, the emergence and disappearance of many Great Kingdoms, Babylon endured. When Nebuchadnezzar ascended his country’s throne in 605 BCE, he did so in a city which could boast a pedigree at least 2,000 years old, the longest lifespan of any city outside Egypt in the entire Near East.

For some centuries after its foundation Babylon remained a relatively insignificant settlement, though it achieved the status of a regional administrative centre of the Ur III dynasty (2112–2104). Its insignificance probably meant that it was little affected by the upheavals and invasions which brought this dynasty to an end, or by the ensuing military contests between the kingdoms of Isin and Larsa for supremacy over southern Mesopotamia. However, during this so-called Isin-Larsa period (2017–1763), we see an important development in the city’s history with the establishment there of a dynasty of Amorite kings (*circa* 1894). The Amorites, called the Martu in texts of the third millennium, were originally Semitic nomads, who may initially have entered the Mesopotamian plain in search of suitable pasture-land for their flocks. But as their numbers increased, they adopted a more settled existence, posing an ever-increasing threat to the security of the kingdoms and city-states of the region. Indeed, shortly before the fall of the Ur III kingdom an Amorite chieftain had set himself up as ruler of the city-state of Larsa, just 40 kilometres to the north of Ur.

Under the first five rulers of the Amorite dynasty in Babylon, whose reigns covered a period of approximately 100 years, Babylon was but one of a number of petty kingdoms over which some sort of supremacy was exercised by the rival

states of Isin and Larsa. But in 1792 there was a dramatic upswing in the little kingdom’s fortunes. This came with the accession of the sixth king of the dynasty, a man called Hammurabi (1792–1749). To begin with, Hammurabi made little impact on the world beyond his kingdom’s frontiers. In fact he appears to have devoted the first twenty-eight years of his reign to the kingdom’s internal administration, including a programme of legal and social reform.

But in his twenty-ninth regnal year he adopted an aggressive new militaristic policy. It was a policy which, he claimed, was sparked off by a coalition of enemy forces, including the Elamites, Gutians, Assyrians and the people of Eshnunna (mod. Tell Asmar), who were threatening the security of Babylon. He may well have been right. The more successful Hammurabi was in organizing his kingdom into an efficient and prosperous political unit, the more likely he was to attract the unwelcome attentions of his neighbours. He proceeded against his proclaimed enemies, one after the other, conquering in succession Larsa (1763)[9] and Eshnunna (1761). These conquests placed southern and central Mesopotamia under Babylonian control. Next, Hammurabi attacked and captured Mari (1761), which after regaining its independence from Assyrian rule under its energetic ruler Zimri-Lim (1776–1761) had become one of the Near East’s most powerful kingdoms. Finally, in Hammurabi’s thirty-sixth year on the throne, the final remnants of what had once been the empire of the great Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad fell beneath his sway.

This in effect led to the unification of the whole of Mesopotamia under Babylon’s overlordship—half a century or more before the Hittite kingdom was established in central Anatolia. But by the time Babylon had achieved this status Hammurabi was an old man. He died within a few years of establishing his empire, after a reign lasting more than four decades. Under the reign of his son Samsu-iluna (1749–1712), the empire began to contract. This was in part due to the emergence of a new rival dynasty called the ‘Sealand’, which arose in the marshlands of southern Mesopotamia and won control over Babylonia as far north as the city of Nippur.[10] Yet in spite of the shrinking of the realm over which they held sway, Hammurabi’s successors managed to maintain their power in Babylon for some 150 years after his death. Finally, in the reign of the man fated to be the last of these successors, Samsu-ditana, the dynasty—along with what was left of the empire was brought dramatically to an end, with the conquest and sack of Babylon by the Hittite king Mursili I (1595).

We have little information about the aftermath of this conquest. Once he had plundered the city, Mursili had no further interest in it, and immediately began his long trek homewards. However, the ultimate beneficiaries were a group called the Kassites. These were immigrants into southern Mesopotamia, perhaps from a homeland in the Zagros mountains (in the region of Elam),[11] making their first recorded appearance in history during Hammurabi’s reign. Initially there may have been some hostilities between the newcomers and their involuntary hosts, but the Kassites seem eventually to have lived peacefully in their adopted homeland. As pastoralists and seasonal workers, their existence may have been

predominantly a seminomadic one. Yet there were some who rapidly adapted to the ways of settled urban life, and by the time of Babylon's fall a group of them had begun to constitute themselves as a major political force within the country. These, it appears, reaped the most lasting benefits of the termination of Hammurabi's line, for in the wake of the Hittite conquest a Kassite dynasty rose to pre-eminence in Babylonia. After conquering the 'Sealanders' in the south, this dynasty firmly entrenched itself as the supreme power throughout Babylonia, a position which it was to hold almost without interruption until the last days of the Late Bronze Age.[12]

The Kassite achievement was a remarkable one in a number of respects. Remarkable, first of all, was the fact that a foreign line of rulers who had but recently followed a largely nomadic way of life succeeded in establishing control over a sophisticated civilization and maintaining this control for a span of time almost without parallel in any period of history for a ruling dynasty. Remarkable too was the fact that the Kassites were instrumental in achieving once more for the kingdom the status of a major international power, in both a political and a commercial sense. But most remarkable of all was the Kassite cultural achievement. Not merely were the cultural traditions of Hammurabic Babylon preserved and nurtured. Under the patronage of the Kassite kings the arts and sciences of the kingdom flourished as never before. Akkadian in its Babylonian form became the international language of diplomacy, widely used throughout the ancient Near East. Skilled Babylonian professionals in the fields of medicine, sculpture, oracular consultation and the scribal arts were in high demand amongst their neighbours. This, along with Babylon's extensive international trading activities, gave the city and the land which it governed major international status, well justifying its ruler's inclusion in the exclusive club of the Great Kings of the Near East.

Our knowledge of the individual rulers of the Kassite dynasty is sketchy. Often we have little or no more than names. And when we do have more detailed information about particular Kassite kings and members of their families and occasionally high-ranking Kassite officials, this is often due to information provided by foreign sources. Thus we learn from the Hittite king Mursili II of his father Suppiluliuma's marriage to a Babylonian princess, daughter of Burnaburiash II. The new queen's tyrannous behaviour in the Hittite court, her extravagance, her currying of favourites and her introduction of undesirable foreign customs into Hatti are graphically described by Mursili, her stepson. Finally, she stood accused of plotting against and murdering Mursili's beloved wife —and ended her life in banishment from the Hittite capital. As we have noted, Burnaburiash also contracted an ill-fated marriage alliance with his Assyrian counterpart Ashur-uballit, and is otherwise well known from his exchanges of correspondence with the pharaoh Akhenaten. These letters serve as a most interesting source of information on Burnaburiash the man, as well as on the nature of his relationship with the Egyptian court. So too the exchanges between his father Kadashman-Enlil I (1374?–1360) and the pharaoh Amenhotep III. In

neither case, however, do the letters put much flesh on the relatively bare bones of Babylonian history in the period of composition, the middle decades of the fourteenth century.

Of more significance in this respect is a lengthy and well-preserved letter which the Hittite king Hattusili III wrote to the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil II (1263–1255) shortly after the latter's accession. The letter contains a number of points of historical interest about the political situation in Babylon at the time Kadashman-Enlil ascended the throne, and the involvement of his father Kadashman-Turgu (1281–1264) with both Hatti and Egypt prior to this. We learn too from the letter of the presence of Aramean tribes in the region, providing us with one of the earliest references to a people who were to play so prominent a role in the Syro-Palestinian region during the early centuries of the first millennium.

In military terms, the Babylonian kingdom of the Kassites played a very limited role in the international arena. It never made any attempt to expand its territorial holdings west of the Euphrates river; and east of the Euphrates Assyria's claims of Babylonian aggression against it were probably exaggerated. Yet other great powers saw it as a kingdom worth cultivating and accorded its ruler a status equal to their own. This may have been primarily due to the material benefits which a close association with Babylon could bring. But we cannot discount altogether the possibility that Babylon was also seen as a useful potential military ally, by Hatti against Mitanni, and later against Egypt, and perhaps also by Egypt against Hatti. The likelihood of Babylon providing tangible military support for an ally at war in the Euphrates or, more generally, the Syrian region may have been remote. But a position of benevolent neutrality by the Babylonian king would at least ensure that a brother-king's army campaigning against an enemy east or west of the Euphrates would not be confronted with hostile action from Babylon as well. A judicious marriage alliance might help guarantee this neutrality—which was no doubt an important motive for Suppiluliuma's decision to take on board the Babylonian princess as his principal consort, shortly before he embarked on his campaign to destroy the kingdom of Mitanni lying to Babylon's north.

Strategic considerations may also have been among the factors prompting the Hittite king Hattusili III to seek a renewal of a Hittite-Babylonian alliance in the early days of Kadashman-Enlil II's reign. Above all, an increasingly belligerent Assyria must have been seen as a distinct threat to both kingdoms, in spite of Hattusili's efforts to establish friendly relations with the Assyrian king Adad-nirari I. We do not know whether Hattusili's letter to Kadashman-Enlil did in fact lead to closer links between Hatti and Babylon. But the Assyrian menace remained unchecked, as the upstart kingdom continued to expand its territorial holdings in the Euphrates region and the lands to its north. It was but a matter of time before it would turn its attention in other directions as well—westwards across the Euphrates, or southwards. Babylon was under serious threat. As we have seen, the threat became reality, with the final blow being delivered by the

Assyrian king Tukulti-Ninurta I. After his defeat of the Hittites in the battle of Nihriya, Tukulti-Ninurta marched south, swept across the borders of his southern neighbour, routed the forces of its king Kashtiliash, and entered the gates of Babylon as the city's new master. It was a splendid triumph, but a short-lived one. Tukulti-Ninurta had dangerously over-stretched his resources, and was soon to lose control of his newly won prize.

The Kassite dynasty thus regained its independence from Assyria, and managed to survive for another seven decades. During this time it was not entirely free of foreign interference, suffering particularly from aggression by the Elamites in the east. Nonetheless, during the dynasty's declining years Babylon seems to have enjoyed brief periods of stability and prosperity. But the kingdom over which the dynasty ruled, perhaps sometimes only nominally, could no longer claim the status of a major international power. The Kassite regime ended with the short reign of Enlil-nadin-ahi (1157–1155). With his death Babylon became subject to a succession of insignificant dynasties until once more Assyria triumphed over it. In the eighth century it became a vassal state of the Assyrian New Kingdom.

The kingdom of Egypt[13]

Egypt was to learn a hard lesson. Despite its relative isolation from the rest of the Near Eastern world it too was vulnerable to foreign invasion like any of the other kingdoms of this world—particularly when the land became divided against itself. After the Middle Kingdom rulers had given their country some four centuries of unity and stability (2055–1650), Egypt fell apart politically, as it had done in the so-called First Intermediate period (2160–2055). Once more, in this Second Intermediate period (1650–1550), a succession of weak rulers briefly appeared and rapidly disappeared. None who claimed the throne had the ability or the support necessary to reunify their kingdom and arrest its military and economic decline. The situation was ripe for exploitation.

Already during the Middle Kingdom, immigrants from Canaan had settled in the Egyptian Delta in substantial numbers.[14] Indeed, some scholars have considered them the cause of the breakdown of political control which brought the Middle Kingdom to an end.[15] They may well have been a significant contributing factor. Among their numbers a powerful group arose, one closely linked with the population of Middle Bronze III Palestine, who for perhaps as much as a century dominated the Egyptian kingdom. From their leaders, commonly referred to by the name Hyksos,[16] there emerged a line of kings who, after first ruling from Memphis, subsequently took up residence at Avaris (mod. Tell el-Dab'a) in the eastern Delta. In the process they reduced to vassal status the enfeebled Egyptian thirteenth dynasty, and its fourteenth dynasty offshoot in the Delta. Thus Egypt's fifteenth dynasty came into being, one consisting of four or more foreign kings. But the extent of its influence was limited. Dramatic though its rise to power had been, it never succeeded in imposing direct rule over the

whole of Egypt. It had neither the resources nor the administrative capacity to achieve this. And even in those regions where its authority was acknowledged, much of this authority was exercised by deputies, a collection of Asiatic princelings (the so-called sixteenth dynasty) in parts of the Delta region and native Egyptian vassals in Upper Egypt.

For much of their time in Egypt, the Hyksos appear to have met with little serious challenge from the country's native inhabitants. But Thebes in Upper Egypt finally emerged as a centre of resistance. Installed here, shortly after the Hyksos had subjugated the thirteenth dynasty, was a line of local kings constituting the seventeenth dynasty. By acknowledging the Hyksos as their overlords they had avoided hostilities with the Avaris-based foreigners—until the accession of the dynasty's last king, Kamose (1555–1550). After successfully campaigning in the land of Kush[17] to the south, which was an ally of the Hyksos and a clear threat to the Theban dynasty, Kamose launched a series of attacks on the Hyksos, wresting from their control all territory south of Memphis and carrying out a lightning raid on Avaris itself, the very seat of the foreigners' power.

This paved the way for the campaigns of his brother Ahmose. The new Theban leader captured Avaris, drove the Hyksos back to the lands whence their ancestors had come, inflicted further defeats upon them there, and reunited the whole of Egypt beneath his sway (1529). His successes marked the beginning of a new era in Egyptian history, one which extended through the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth dynasties, covering the period we call the New Kingdom (1550–1069). Ahmose (1550–1525) became the founder of the first of these dynasties, the eighteenth, establishing his dynastic seat in the city of Thebes, which had led the resistance against the Hyksos. Already before his accession the first steps had been taken towards the liberation and reunification of his country. This, together with his fraternal relationship with his predecessor, linked him closely with the preceding dynasty. Yet his policies and his enterprises were to set a new course for Egyptian history. It was with Egypt's future rather than with its past that he was most closely associated. For under his guidance and inspiration the foundations of an Egyptian empire were laid, and Egypt came to claim its place as one of the great international powers of the age.

The early rulers of the eighteenth dynasty conducted military campaigns south into Nubia and north into Syria and Palestine. In the south Ahmose and his first two successors, Amenhotep I and Tuthmosis I, consolidated and extended the territorial acquisitions already achieved by Kamose, bringing the whole of Lower and Upper Nubia under direct Egyptian control. Lower Nubia, sometimes called Wawat by the Egyptians, covered the region extending southwards from Aswan, between the First and Second Cataracts. Upper Nubia extended upstream from the Second Cataract and beyond the Fourth. In terms of both its mineral[18] and its agricultural wealth, Nubia became one of Egypt's most valuable possessions.

But it was Tuthmosis I (1504–1492) who first placed Egypt squarely centre-stage in international affairs with his triumphant military progress through Syria to the Euphrates river—an event which he commemorated by setting up a victory stele on the bank of the river. In purely military terms, his achievement was impressive. But as far as long-term consequences went, he had bitten off rather more than he or his successors could comfortably digest. Under the dowager queen Hatshepsut (1479–1458), wife of Tuthmosis I's son and successor, Tuthmosis II, Egyptian influence in Syria suffered substantial shrinkage. Hatshepsut abandoned most of her father-in-law's conquests, retaining only the southern part of Palestine. Very likely, her decision to reduce her kingdom's territorial holdings was connected with the increasingly dominant role which the kingdom of Mitanni was playing in Syrian affairs. Hatshepsut no doubt considered compromise and accommodation rather than military force as the best way of dealing with the aggressive, territory-hungry Hurrian kingdom. In any case she was more concerned with bolstering her own kingdom's economic prosperity and developing international trade links than with military enterprises and territorial gains. The inscriptions of her reign feature not military triumphs but commercial expeditions to Phoenicia for timber, to the peninsula of Sinai for turquoise, and to the land of Punt, probably in the region of the Sudan or Eritrea, for a wide range of exotic products.

Her stepson, co-regent and successor Tuthmosis III (1479–1425)[19] took a much more aggressive line. On his accession, Egyptian military ideology was vigorously reasserted. Once again the image of the pharaoh as a Smiter of Asiatics came to the fore. Seventeen campaigns in Asia established Tuthmosis' reputation as the greatest warlord of the age. One of the highlights of his campaigns was the defeat he inflicted at Megiddo upon a coalition of Syrian states loyal to Mitanni (1457), with substantial spoils, including no less than 924 chariots, as his prize. The way now lay open before him into the very heartland of the kingdom of Mitanni. Barely a century had passed since Egyptian rulers had in their own land bent the knee in homage to Asiatic foreigners. The tide had turned completely. Tuthmosis had triumphed in the lands whence these foreign rulers had come. It was to him that homage was now given. It was to him that the rulers of the Asiatic regions—the kings of Hatti, Assyria and Babylon—sent gifts and tribute, seeking friendship and alliances.

But many of Tuthmosis' military gains proved as ephemeral as those of his namesake, the first Tuthmosis. This must to a large extent have been due to the Mitanni factor. The Hurrian kingdom appears to have suffered a temporary eclipse while Tuthmosis held sway in Syria. But under its vigorous new king, Shaushtatar, Mitanni was once more on the make. And once more, compromise and accommodation were seen as the best way of dealing with a kingdom that might prove a useful ally, and certainly a dangerous enemy. In the reign of the pharaoh Tuthmosis IV, agreement was reached between the two powers. The Egyptians conceded Mitannian territorial claims in northern Syria, while part of coastal and much of southern Syria were left within the Egyptian sphere of

authority. Inland, the division of territory between the two kingdoms lay just to the north of the city of Kadesh on the Orontes river.

The settlement and defensive alliance between Egypt and Mitanni may well have contributed significantly to the period of peace and prosperity which Egypt came to enjoy in the reign of Tuthmosis' successor Amenhotep III.[20] Secure in its agreement with Mitanni, Egypt remained free of any serious military threats throughout Amenhotep's reign. His kingdom enjoyed an almost unprecedented period of peace, stability and prosperity while he occupied the throne. In stark contrast, this was also the period when Hatti was brought to the verge of extinction by invasions across all its borders. Amenhotep took advantage of the situation by seeking an alliance with the western Anatolian kingdom of Arzawa, believing that it would soon be the supreme power in the region. But the Hittites confounded his expectations. And when Hatti recovered and became embroiled in its long final conflict with Mitanni, the pharaoh maintained cordial relations with both sides. His country had no need for involvement in a major war. Its economy was thriving, its administration was stable, its treasuries were full to bursting, its population was enjoying unprecedented prosperity, and its skills and resources were being reflected in a succession of spectacular building achievements.

Then came the Amarna revolution.

It is unlikely that there will ever be an end to the swirl of controversies surrounding the pharaoh Amenhotep IV (1352–1336),[21] whose new name Akhenaten reflects the exclusive devotion of himself and his family to the cult of the sun god Aten. What labels, what assessments are really applicable to him? Was he a great religious visionary? Can he legitimately be regarded as the world's first monotheist? Was he a fanatical heretic who brought his country to the brink of ruin? A self-absorbed recluse who allowed corruption to flourish in the administration of his kingdom, who seriously jeopardized his kingdom's international standing? Or was he a conscientious if lacklustre ruler unfairly maligned by the 'traditionalists' who lost status under him?[22]

We shall have a lot more to say about Akhenaten, given that the site where he founded his new city Akhetaten (mod. el Amarna) has produced one of the most valuable archives of international correspondence that has come down to us from the ancient world. The significance of this should not be overlooked by anyone making an assessment of the pharaoh's reign. What clearly emerges from the Amarna letters is that foreign kings—particularly those of Hatti, Mitanni, Assyria and Babylon—were eager to maintain close diplomatic relations with Egypt throughout the Amarna period, and indeed sometimes sought to strengthen their ties with it through marriage alliances. If the pharaoh's 'royal brothers' believed that Egypt was now in decline and had lost its international standing, they certainly gave no indication of that in their letters. Even the great Hittite warlord Suppiluliuma was anxious to assure the pharaoh of his friendship, his respect for Egyptian territory and his desire to maintain peace with Egypt, at the very time he was setting about the final destruction of its ally Mitanni.

Further, the comparatively large surviving dossier of correspondence between Akhenaten and his vassals in Syria and Palestine leaves no doubt that the pharaoh kept in regular touch with provincial activities (even though, allegedly, he often failed to respond to his vassals' frequent complaints and demands). If this really was a king who seriously neglected the affairs of his kingdom, a king who was responsible for a substantial decline in Egypt's international standing, it is quite remarkable that the letters written by and to him, and by and to his father in the latter's final years, should have the distinction of being one of our richest sources of information on the world of international relations in the Late Bronze Age. It is also remarkable that a king who was allegedly obsessed with his religion failed to leave one single trace of this obsession in any of his correspondence, with either his peers or his vassals.

With Akhenaten's death, Egypt's eighteenth dynasty had almost run its course. The inconsequential reign of the boy-king Tutankhamun (1336–1327), last of the dynasty, would scarcely have rated more than a passing mention in the pages of Egyptian history but for the discovery of his virtually intact tomb—and the circumstances surrounding its discovery. Not surprisingly, the pharaoh who had kingship thrust upon him at the age of nine, and died some nine years later, achieved little during his brief adolescent reign. He did, however, oversee the abandonment of Akhenaten's city and the reinstatement of many of Egypt's former traditions and power structures. He also succeeded in arousing the wrath of the man who was now indisputably the most powerful individual in the Near East. Almost inexplicably, Tutankhamun ordered an attack on the city of Kadesh, now subject territory of the Hittites. To this point, the Hittite king Suppiluliuma had taken considerable care to avoid hostilities with his southern neighbour. And now this neighbour had responded with a totally unprovoked act of aggression. Retaliation was swift. The Egyptian expeditionary force was well and truly trounced by the Hittites. But Suppiluliuma's fury remained unassuaged, even after the pharaoh's premature death shortly afterwards.

We can only speculate on the reasons for Tutankhamun's attack on the Hittites. Perhaps he was seeking to cultivate the image of yet another 'Smiter of Asiatics' in the tradition of his great predecessors, and seriously overestimated his chances of success. But whatever the motive, his disastrously ill-conceived initiative was to bear directly on an intriguing sequence of events, involving a letter, a high-level investigative mission and an apparent act of treachery which set Egypt and Hatti on an irrevocable collision course. To this we shall return.

The brief reign of Tutankhamun's successor Ay (1327–1323) and the longer and rather more effective reign of his successor Horemheb (1323–1295) bridged a gap of more than thirty years between the demise of the eighteenth dynasty and the birth of the nineteenth. Akhetaten was abandoned shortly after its founder's death, and almost all material traces of the Amarna period were quickly and thoroughly obliterated. Inscriptions were composed, vilifying Akhenaten's regime. Even today the propaganda directed against its leading figure, first by

Tutankhamun (or his counsellors) and subsequently by Horemheb, continues to influence both popular and scholarly opinion about this so-called 'heretic pharaoh'. Egypt's old traditions had been restored. Its Theban-based aristocracy and priesthood had regained their former power. The kingdom once more began to reassert its role as a major force in the international scene. All was ready for the emergence of a new royal dynasty.

It was at this point that a man called Pramesses made his appearance. Pramesses was what might be described in Mesopotamian terminology as 'a son of a nobody'. Though of noble status, his family was an undistinguished one, living in a remote part of the Delta. Hardly a promising start for one marked out for greatness. But he had in his youth caught the attention of the childless Horemheb. Impressed by the young man's qualities, Horemheb saw in him a potential successor, and probably spent some years grooming him for this position. So it came to pass. On his mentor's death, Pramesses ascended Egypt's throne as Ramesses I (1295–1294). His accession marked the beginning of the nineteenth, the so-called Ramesside, dynasty, whose rulers held sway over Egypt during one of its best-known and most materially and culturally splendid periods.

Unfortunately for Ramesses, he had little time to do more than get the dynasty underway, for he died within a year or so of his accession. Before his death, he had made his son Seti I (1294–1279) his co-regent, and as sole pharaoh Seti promptly set about the task of restoring Egypt fully to its status as one of the most formidable political and military powers in the Near East.[23] A series of campaigns in Canaan and Palestine firmly re-establ ished Egyptian control in these regions and were followed by further successful campaigns in southern Syria. The scene was now set for a show-down with Hatti. Tensions had been simmering between the two kingdoms ever since the death of Tutankhamun. Egypt now had a ruler with the capacity and the resources to challenge the might of the Hittite kingdom, then ruled by King Muwatalli II. As far as we can sift fact from rhetoric in his war monument at Karnak, Seti won a decisive victory over the Hittites in a battle for the disputed territories of Amurru and Kadesh. Overlordship in Syria was now fairly evenly divided between Egypt and Hatti, with the region from Kadesh southwards and the coastal strip north to and including the kingdom of Amurru acknowledged as belonging within the Egyptian sphere of influence.

An uneasy peace between the two great powers served as but a 'half-time' respite before the great clash between Muwatalli and Seti's son and successor Ramesses II (1279–1213)[24] at Kadesh some five years after Seti's death. Undoubtedly Ramesses' courageous stand in the battle, after the shock Hittite attack upon his division, saved his army from a total rout, and very possibly His Majesty's own life. The day ended with battle honours fairly even. Subsequently, however, the Egyptian troops were forced to retreat south with the Hittite army in pursuit, and Ramesses was left with no option other than to concede to Muwatalli all Syrian territory northwards from and including the

region of Upi or Apina, which incorporated the city of Damascus. Not surprisingly, the pharaoh conveniently ignored this after-math of battle in his record of the campaign—which he depicted as a great personal triumph over the 'Fallen One of Hatti', emblazoning his version of events in word and picture on the walls of no less than five Egyptian temples.

However much he may have cultivated the image of a great warrior pharaoh, Ramesses was clearly no military genius. The success of the initial Hittite onslaught upon his forces at Kadesh had been due largely to the Egyptians' poor campaign strategy, inadequate reconnaissance and highly unreliable intelligence system. As his army's commander-in-chief, Ramesses had to bear the chief responsibility for this; so too responsibility for the fallout which followed in the wake of the campaign. The humiliating spectacle of the pharaoh's forces fleeing the Hittite advance had serious local repercussions. For two years after the campaign, Ramesses was confronted with uprisings by his subject rulers in Canaan and Palestine, encouraged by the recent turn of events to make a bid for independence. The pharaoh lost no time in responding. In a series of vigorous military operations he promptly and decisively reasserted his supremacy over the rebels.

There were other threats to which he had to respond, much closer to home. The most serious came from the land of the Libyans in the desert regions west of Egypt. Already in his father's reign nomadic Libyan groups had exerted pressure on Egypt's western frontiers, threatening to penetrate the Egyptian homeland and settle in substantial numbers in the fertile Delta region. Ramesses built a series of fortresses extending from the western Delta to what is now el-Alamein to keep the enemy at bay. But these gave no lasting guarantee of security against attacks from the west, and the Libyan menace was to resurface constantly in the reigns of Ramesses' successors.

Though never entirely free of the threat of foreign intruders, the kingdom of Egypt during Ramesses II's sixty-six-year occupancy of the throne enjoyed a sustained period of stability and high prosperity. After Kadesh the pharaoh figured only spasmodically in a warrior role. For the great bulk of his long reign, his energies were devoted far more to monumental building projects and to building his kingdom's wealth through trade and the exploitation of its mineral-rich regions than to ambitious military enterprises. Whether or not Ramesses was fully conscious of it, Amenhotep III rather than Tuthmosis III served as his model. It was as a builder and international statesman rather than as a warlord that he made his mark in the contemporary scene. The great respect that he commanded amongst his foreign peers, and indeed amongst his foreign peers' subjects, is a clear reflection of his standing in the world of international politics and diplomacy. In this world he was without doubt the most highly esteemed figure of his age. It was in his time that peace was finally concluded with Hatti.[25] A copy of the Akkadian version of the treaty which he drew up with the Hittite king Hattusili III can be seen today mounted at the entrance to the Security Council of the United Nations in New York. Much of the extensive

correspondence that passed between the Hittite and Egyptian royal courts prior and subsequent to the concluding of the treaty has survived. This correspondence, we shall see, does not merely throw important light on the field of international relations at this time. It also provides us with many valuable insights into the lives and personalities of those between whom the letters were exchanged.

In actual fact the alliance between Egypt and Hatti was of little practical value in stemming the outside forces which were posing an increasingly serious threat to the security of both kingdoms. Ramesses' son and successor Merneptah (1213–1203) was confronted by fresh challenges from Libya, made more dangerous by an alliance which the Libyan chief Meryre formed with a coalition of the so-called Sea Peoples who joined forces with the Libyans for an onslaught on Egypt. Merneptah succeeded in repelling the invaders as well as putting down a perhaps not unconnected revolt in Nubia. But worse was to come.

With Merneptah's death the nineteenth dynasty came to an end in a series of dynastic squabbles and short reigns. Order was to some extent restored by Ramesses III (1184–1153), the (effective) founder of the twentieth dynasty, who retained the throne-name of his illustrious predecessor—as did eight of his successors. But this new Ramesses had little time to occupy his throne before he was confronted with several major onslaughts upon his kingdom by both land and sea. Once again the Sea Peoples were on the move, travelling south in large numbers along the Levantine coast and through Palestine, and attacking the Egyptian coast by sea. There were further attacks too from Libya, in the fifth and eighth years of Ramesses' reign. Once again Egypt succeeded in repelling the invaders, stopping the land forces at the Egyptian frontier in Djahi (in the region of later Phoenicia), defeating the sea forces in a furious battle, graphically depicted on the walls of Ramesses' temple at Medinet Habu, and driving back the Libyans.

Much credit should be given to Ramesses for these victories, which no doubt helped ensure that the dynasty which he founded continued for almost a century after his death—long after other Bronze Age kingdoms had fallen. But Egypt too had been seriously weakened. It could no longer claim the status of a great international power. A different pattern of great powers was to emerge in the first millennium, though there were old names amongst the new; both Assyria and Babylon were to rise again. For a time Egypt continued to enjoy an independent existence, due partly, no doubt, to its geographical location. But distance and intervening desert had never given it total protection. Finally it succumbed, to the Assyrian king Esarhaddon in the seventh century, and became, like Babylon, but one of a number of subject states incorporated into the Assyrian empire.

The kingdom of Hatti[26]

> In former days there was a Great King called Labarna. His country was small. But on whatever campaign he went, he subjugated by his might the lands of the enemy. He kept devastating these lands, stripping them of their power. And he made the sea their boundaries.

Thus in his famous Proclamation[27] the sixteenth century King Telipinu recorded the exploits of his earliest known predecessor upon the throne of Hatti. The legendary Labarna had transformed his realm from petty principality into a kingdom which stretched across much of the eastern half of Anatolia, its southernmost boundaries lapped by the waters of the Mediterranean. Labarna's achievements served as an inspiration for all future Hittite kings. So revered was his name that it became part of the royal nomenclature of those who subsequently occupied his throne. It is with him that the history of the kingdom of Hatti effectively begins, early in the seventeenth century.

Already in the third millennium a number of kingdoms had arisen in the central and eastern regions of Anatolia. Prominent amongst these was the central Anatolian kingdom called Hatti. It lay within the region bounded by the river called the Marassantiya by the Hittites. Its seat of power was the city Hattus. The population of the region consisted predominantly of an indigenous population group called the Hattians. But other groups were also present, most notably peoples who spoke an Indo-European language or languages. They had come to Anatolia possibly from an original homeland in the regions north of the Black Sea (though this is still much debated), and by the end of the third millennium had settled in parts of eastern and central Anatolia, as well as further to the west.

By the early second millennium, the period when the Assyrians established a number of trading colonies in eastern and central Anatolia, Hattian and Indo-European elements were becoming progressively intermingled. Even so, particular areas within the general region appear to have retained a distinctive Hattian or a distinctive Indo-European character. A powerful dynasty of likely Indo-European origin arose in the eastern Anatolian city of Kussara and established its new base of operations in the city of Nesa, otherwise known as Kanesh. This lay just south of the southern bend of the Marassantiya river, and to it was attached the headquarters of the Assyrian trading network. From Nesa, King Anitta, son of Pithana, who had won control of the city, launched a series of campaigns both north and south of the river, which led to the establishment of an eastern Anatolian empire under his sway. In the course of his campaigns he destroyed the city of Hattus, sowing its site with weeds and declaring that it was never again to be resettled.

The empire built by Anitta was short-lived, lasting probably no more than a generation after his conquests. Its disintegration was accompanied by the withdrawal of Assyrian merchant activities from Anatolia, around the middle of the eighteenth century. Always fearful of the risks of conducting commercial

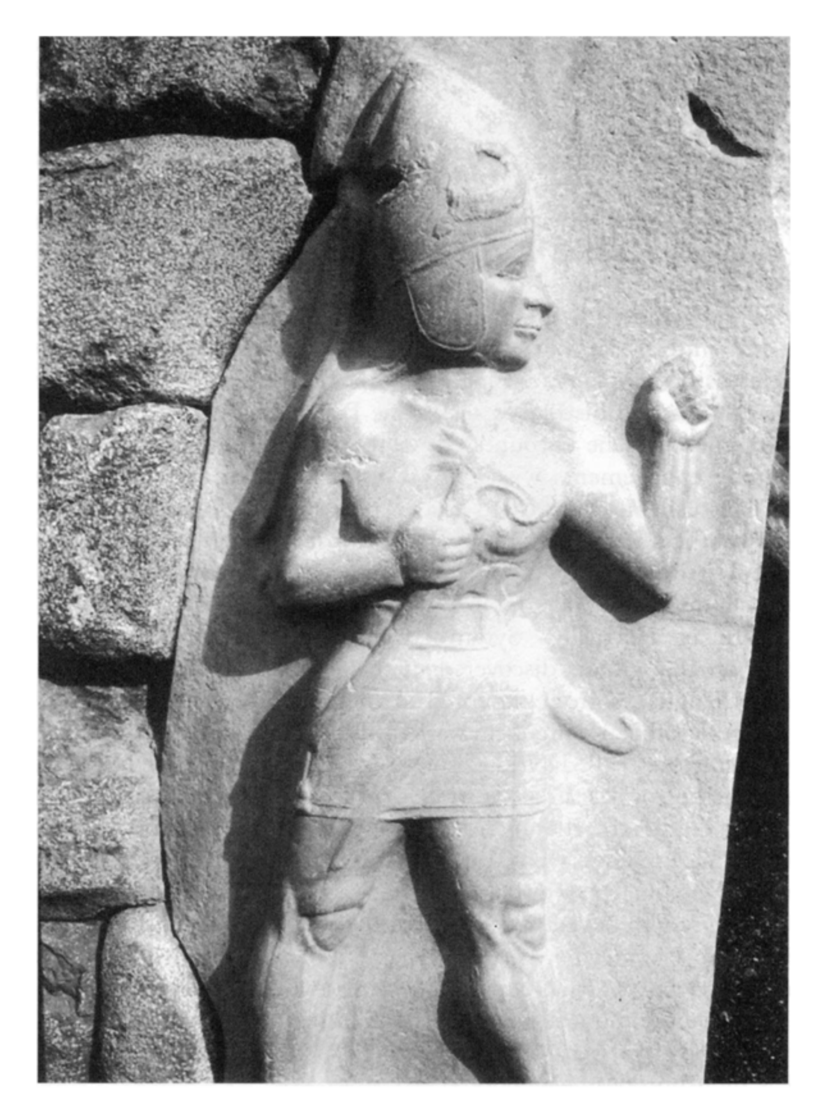


Figure 1: The ‘King’s’ Gate at Hattusa

enterprises in politically unstable regions, the Assyrian merchants dismantled their trading network and abandoned their Anatolian colonies. We know little about the next half-century or so, for with the departure of the Assyrians written records ceased, and archaeological evidence becomes extremely sparse. For want of more evidence we might think of this period as a mini Dark Age.

Yet the early seventeenth century saw the beginning of a new era in Anatolian history. For the next five centuries Anatolia was to be dominated by Hatti, the

kingdom of the Hittites. We have referred above to the kingdom's early days under the Great King Labarna, who almost certainly was responsible for making it the supreme power in Anatolia. The man who succeeded him was very likely his grandson, Hattusili I (1650–1620). It was he, almost certainly, who rebuilt the city of Hattusa, defying Anitta's curse, and establishing the seat of his dynasty there. That was but the beginning of his career. Not content with merely emulating his predecessors' achievements, he sought to surpass them. His first step was to consolidate Labarna's conquests in Anatolia, crushing a number of rebellions in the process, and when this was achieved he took the historically momentous step of carrying Hittite arms into Syria. Whatever the specific reasons for his Syrian operations, Hattusili campaigned repeatedly in the region, on one occasion triumphantly leading his troops across the Euphrates river, plundering and destroying the cities he encountered en route. His campaigns locked him into ongoing engagements with the powerful northern Syrian kingdom of Yamhad. Hattusili made repeated attacks on its capital Aleppo, but though Yamhad's conflicts with the forces of Hatti must have left it seriously weakened, the Hittite Great King never succeeded in breaching its capital's defences. On his death, Aleppo remained intact.

We learn of Hattusili's Syrian adventures from records written in cuneiform on clay tablets discovered in the archives of the Hittite capital. Some eight languages are represented in these archives, but it is clear that the kingdom's official language was an Indo-European one—what the Hittites themselves called Nesite, so named from the city of Nesa, which had become the royal seat of Anitta's dynasty during the Assyrian colony period. This indicates the likely prominence of Indo-European Nesite-speakers in the kingdom's political and social structure, at least during its early years. Nonetheless, we should almost certainly discard the notion that the Hittite kingdom began with the dominance of a distinct ethnic group of Indo-European origin who won supremacy over and imposed its authority upon an indigenous Hattian population. Already by the early second millennium, the population of the central Anatolian region, including the Land of Hatti, was probably a very mixed one which included Hattian and Hurrian as well as Indo-European elements.

There was no sense of ethnic exclusivity in the Hittite world. Like the Egyptians, the Hittites were a people of mixed racial origins. They had no specific name to identify themselves as a people. They simply called themselves, after the region in which they lived, 'people of the Land of Hatti', using an old Hattian name which may well have been in use for many centuries, or even millennia, before the rise of the Hittite kingdom. We must bear in mind that the name 'Hittite' is a relatively modern term, one influenced (somewhat inappropriately) by the references to 'Hittites' in the Bible.

Hattusili was succeeded by his grandson Mursili I (1620–1590), who, following quite literally in his grandfather's footsteps, sought not merely to equal his predecessors' achievements but to surpass them—and on a spectacular scale. Leading his kingdom's military forces once more into Syria, he laid siege

to, captured and destroyed the city of Aleppo, thus delivering the final *coup de grâce* to the kingdom of Yamhad. But he spent little time revelling in his achievement. The ashes of Aleppo may still have been warm when he marched his forces east to the Euphrates, and then south along the river to the city of Babylon. In an action that was to resonate in Hittite tradition as one of the great achievements of the early Hittite kingdom, Mursili took the city by storm, plundered it of its treasures and destroyed it.

Yet, spectacular though these military successes undoubtedly were, they achieved little of lasting value, either for king or for kingdom. Within a few years of his return to Hattusa, Mursili fell victim to an assassin, his brother-in-law Hantili. This act of violence marked the beginning of a serious downturn in the kingdom's fortunes. Hantili was eventually to suffer the same fate he had inflicted on his predecessor. Conspiracy and assassination determined who would occupy the Hittite throne—and for how long. In its weak and divided state, the kingdom fell prey to the Hurrian enemy, who crossed its borders from the south-east and apparently roamed and plundered the Land of Hatti at will. Hatti's subject territories were quick to exploit the situation, breaking their allegiance and leaving the kingdom with little more than the territory around the capital. A severe and long-lasting drought apparently also added to Hatti's woes.

The seizure of the throne by King Telipinu (1525–1500) ushered in a period of relative stability. New rules for the royal succession were laid down, and supervisory and disciplinary bodies put in place to ensure that the new legal provisions made by Telipinu were strictly observed. The king also succeeded in regaining some of the kingdom's lost territories. But he was a realist. Faced with a situation where attempts to recover a former subject state were likely to prove unacceptably costly or risky, he sought to ensure its support or at least its benevolence by the route of diplomacy. He drew up a treaty with Ispuhtashu, king of the state of Kizzuwadna in south-eastern Anatolia. The state had recently been created from subject territory which had broken away from Hatti during the reign of King Ammuna. This diplomatic act is the first attested example of what was to become one of the prime tools of Hittite influence and control in the Near East. The treaty was used by Hittite kings to formalize their links with their vassal rulers and to define their obligations and rights in their relationships with other Great Kings of the Near Eastern world.

Telipinu succeeded in restoring some measure of stability to the Hittite monarchy, and to the kingdom at large. But there were fresh coups, though fewer in number, and for the next century Hittite interests and influence were very largely confined to eastern Anatolia. Syria was left to the other major powers of the day, Mitanni and Egypt. Of the next six rulers who followed Telipinu we know very little. The second, Tahurwaili, seems to have been an interloper in the royal line who seized the throne from Telipinu's son-in-law Alluwamna, its rightful occupant. The last of the six, Muwatalli I, seems also to have been an interloper who murdered his way onto the Hittite throne, and was in his turn murdered off it.

His assassins probably engineered the accession of a new king called Tudhaliya (*circa* 1400), and in the process paved the way for a new era in Hittite history. It was an era in which the Hittites re-embarked on military enterprises far from their homeland—both to the far west of Anatolia and once more into Syria. Above all, it was the era when Hatti reached its greatest heights, becoming for a time, in the fourteenth and thirteenth centuries, the supreme power of the Near Eastern world. We shall refer to this era as the New Kingdom, sometimes called the Hittite Empire. It lasted some two centuries (*circa* 1400–1200), during which Hatti enjoyed its most intensive and widespread contacts with the other Great Kingdoms of the Near Eastern world.

Yet even in this period its fortunes fluctuated dramatically. Tudhaliya's substantial military achievements in both Syria and western Anatolia may have re-established Hatti's reputation as a major international power. But the structure of his kingdom remained fragile. Already in the reign of his very capable and conscientious co-regent and successor Arnuwanda, crises were emerging in several parts of the kingdom. Further, a pact between Egypt and Mitanni seriously jeopardized any renewed influence in Syria which Tudhaliya's Syrian campaigns may have won for the Hittites.

The situation reached critical proportions in the reign of the next king Tudhaliya (III)[28] (1375?–1350), who had the misfortune to see his kingdom attacked and invaded from almost all directions, by a wide range of enemy forces in what is commonly referred to as the 'concentric invasions'. The heartland of the Hittite kingdom was penetrated. Tudhaliya was forced to flee to a city called Samuha on the eastern periphery of the homeland, where he held court in exile. The Hittite capital was captured and sacked. In these dark days of the early to mid-fourteenth century, the history of the Hittite kingdom came almost to an end.

Yet plagued though he was by frequent bouts of ill health, Tudhaliya fought back. After much persistence, he succeeded in regaining his kingdom by driving out the enemy forces who occupied it. Some he pursued back into their own lands, where he inflicted devastating defeats upon them. Much of his success was probably due to the military skills of his son and co-commander Suppiluliuma, later to become king of Hatti (1350–1322). Indeed Suppiluliuma was very likely the chief architect of the campaigns which won the Hittites back their homeland. The momentum continued after he occupied the throne. In a brilliantly conducted one-season campaign into Syria, he set his sights on the conquest of the kingdom of Mitanni. Crossing the Euphrates, he occupied and plundered the Mitannian capital Washshuganni, then returned and conquered or won over all the local Syrian kingdoms which had been subject to Mitanni. Mitannian power in the wider international scene was now effectively at an end, though twelve more years were to elapse before Carchemish on the Euphrates, the final Mitannian stronghold, fell to the Hittites.

In western Anatolia, Suppiluliuma mounted expeditions in the Arzawa Lands. Hittite control over these lands was consolidated in the reign of Suppiluliuma's

son Mursili II (1321–1295), who led a two-season campaign there in the third and fourth years of his reign. The campaign culminated in the total dismemberment and depopulation of the largest and most recalcitrant of the Arzawa kingdoms, and the imposition of vassal status on the others. Mursili's son and successor Muwatalli II (1295–1272) made further arrangements for stabilizing Hittite authority in the west before turning his attention to the looming showdown with the pharaoh Ramesses II. The forces met at Kadesh on the Orontes river. As we have noted, battle honours on the day were fairly evenly divided, but the Hittites must be seen as the long-term victors, in terms of the territorial gains they made at Egypt's expense in the wake of the battle.

Muwatalli was succeeded by his son Urhi-Teshub (1272–1267), who initially had the support (or so it appeared) of his uncle, Muwatalli's brother Hattusili. But uncle and nephew fell out, and when Urhi-Teshub attempted to strip his uncle of all his most important offices the latter took up arms against him, defeated him in battle, seized his throne and banished him to Syria. Thus began the reign of Hattusili III (1267–1237). Urhi-Teshub was determined to regain his throne. After unsuccessful attempts to win foreign support against his uncle, he eventually fled his appointed place of exile and for a time found refuge with the pharaoh of Egypt, Ramesses. This caused serious tensions in the relations between Hatti and Egypt, which had otherwise taken a turn for the better since the battle of Kadesh. Ramesses had given his explicit support to Hattusili as the genuine king of Hatti, but claimed in response to Hattusili's repeated demands for the extradition of Urhi-Teshub that Urhi-Teshub was not, or was no longer, in Egypt.

With this one significant exception, relations between the royal court of Hattusili and that of Ramesses remained generally cordial in the aftermath of the famous treaty which Hittite king and Egyptian pharaoh drew up (1258) signalling the end of all hostility between the two kingdoms. The bond between the two kingdoms was further strengthened by a marriage alliance.

Hattusili's death left the reins of power in the hands of his son Tudhaliya IV (1237–1209). Once again, a new Hittite king inherited mounting problems both within his kingdom and beyond. Of particular concern was the renascent Assyria, whose power east of the Euphrates had been growing menacingly in the wake of the destruction of the kingdom of Mitanni. Perhaps in an attempt to curb this power, Tudhaliya provoked a military conflict with his Assyrian counterpart, Tukulti-Ninurta I, and suffered a disastrous defeat at his hands in the battle of Nihriya. It may have been only shortly afterwards that he was faced with a dangerous coup within his own kingdom, possibly even losing his throne for a time to his cousin Kurunta. If so, he succeeded in regaining it, in time to deal with increasing unrest and rebellions in other parts of his kingdom.

But the end was in sight. The last known Hittite king is Tudhaliya's son Suppiluliuma II (Suppiluliama) (1207–), who recorded several campaigns against his enemies, including naval engagements off the coast of Cyprus. Though he appears to have had a number of military successes, his reign and his

kingdom came abruptly to an end, probably within a few years of his accession. What caused the kingdom's final collapse, early in the twelfth century, is still much debated. But there is no doubt that Hattusa suffered a major destruction and was subsequently abandoned. With its fall, the Bronze Age kingdom of Hatti was at an end.

The kingdom of Mitanni[29]

During the last centuries of the third millennium, a diverse range of population groups collectively known as the Hurrians made their earliest recorded appearance in the Near Eastern world. Where the Hurrians' original home-land lay remains uncertain. Some scholars suggest the Kura-Araxes region in Transcaucasia, others a homeland in eastern Anatolia. But whatever their place of origin, they were to have a profound impact—politically, militarily and culturally—both on the regions in which they principally settled and on those further afield with which they came into contact and conflict. An aggressive, expansionist people, their presence is widely attested by the spread of Hurrian names and cultural elements through northern Mesopotamia, northern Syria and eastern Anatolia. Indeed, long after the Hurrians themselves had ceased to be a significant political force in the Near East, Hurrian cultural traditions continued to have a profound influence in the regions where they penetrated.

We learn of the existence of Hurrian states already in the twenty-third century from the record of their incorporation into the Akkadian empire following upon the campaigns of Naram-Sin (2254–2218). But Akkadian sovereignty was short-lived. The empire came to an abrupt end several decades later (2193). In the political vacuum created by its fall, Hurrian-speaking peoples occupied parts of northern and eastern Mesopotamia and established a number of small principalities in the region. For a century or so they appear to have remained free from foreign intervention—up to and through the early years of the Ur III dynasty. The founder of the dynasty, Ur-Nammu (2112–2095), apparently made no move against them. But the situation changed with the accession of Ur-Nammu's militant successor Shulgi (2094–2047). During the course of a series of triumphant military campaigns in the northern and eastern border regions of his kingdom, Shulgi fought against and defeated the Hurrian states located there, taking large numbers of the conquered peoples as prisoners of war.

In the centuries which followed the demise of the Ur III dynasty (*circa* 2000), information about the Hurrians is meagre and fragmentary. But by the end of the sixteenth century a number of the small states with predominantly Hurrian populations had been amalgamated into a single political federation called the kingdom of Mitanni. Who or what was responsible for this union remains an open question. The union was once attributed to an intrusive Indo-Aryan or Indo-Iranian ruling class. This was deduced from the apparent Indo-Iranian names of the kings of Mitanni and the listing of a number of Indo-Iranian gods in the Mitannian pantheon. Of course the notion of an alien ruling class imposing its

authority on a pre-existing subject population is not an uncommon one—and may sometimes be a quite valid one; Kassite rule in Babylon and Norman rule in England serve as examples. In other cases, however, the notion is more questionable. We have already referred to the longstanding and almost certainly erroneous assumption that the kingdom of Hatti was created by an intrusive Indo-European ruling dynasty imposing its authority upon an indigenous subject people of central Anatolia. In the case of Mitanni, the Indo-Iranian character of the kingdom's ruling elite is now less certain than originally supposed.[30] What precisely we can conclude from the presence of Indo-Iranian personal and divine names at the top end of Mitannian society is a matter yet to be resolved.

It is somewhat ironic that a civilization which had such an enduring impact culturally on the Near Eastern world has left us with barely a trace in the material record. Even the locations of the Mitannian capitals Washshuganni and Taide remain unknown. That they lay somewhere in northern Mesopotamia or northern Syria is as much as we can say.[31] On the other hand, written references to the kingdom abound in the records of its contemporaries, who variously refer to it as Hurri, Mitanni or Hanigalbat. The Egyptians and Canaanites called it by its west Semitic name Naharina, or Naharima. The name Maittani, later Mitanni (or Mittani), as used by the natives, is first attested in a fragmentary inscription dating probably to the time of the pharaoh Tuthmosis I.[32]

Once formed, the kingdom of Mitanni rapidly extended its power through northern Mesopotamia across the face of northern Syria and into eastern Anatolia. Military expansion was consolidated by the imposition of Mitannian sovereignty over the states of northern Syria, which now became client kingdoms, in effect vassal states of the aggressive emerging empire. But Mitannian imperialist ambitions remained unsatisfied. There were prospects of even greater prizes beyond the Taurus and anti-Taurus ranges. In the south-east of Anatolia, the country of Kizzuwadna was won over to the Mitannian side, probably by diplomatic pressure rather than by force (see below). It was but a matter of time, and little time at that, before Mitannian forces would pose a serious danger to the kingdom of Hatti—not merely to its subject territories but to its very heartland. This provided the context for many decades of bitter rivalry and conflict between Hatti and Mitanni for supremacy over the regions which both claimed as subject or allied or home territory. There could be no resolution through diplomatic negotiation. The end of rivalry and conflict would come only with the total destruction of one of the contenders.

From the very beginning of recorded Hittite history there are references to hostilities between Hittites and Hurrians. Hattusili I, the Great King of Hatti, was forced to cut short a campaign in Arzawan territory because of a Hurrian invasion of his homeland, one which triggered off uprisings and defections through all his subject territories. The invasion may have been tit for tat—carried out in retaliation for Hattusili’s attacks on Hurrian states (like Ursu, the object of a botched Hittite siege operation) during his campaigns in northern Syria. Hostilities flared once more in the reign of Hattusili’s successor Mursili, attacked

by Hurrian troops as he returned home from his conquest of Babylon. Yet again in the reign of Mursili's assassin and successor Hantili I, Hurrians invaded the Hatti Land, roaming through it and plundering it at will. Hantili eventually drove them out, but in so doing he apparently failed to prevent them capturing and abducting his wife Harapsili and his two sons.

We have already noted the creation of the state of Kizzuwadna in the highly strategically important region of south-east Anatolia. Formerly a part of Hittite subject territory, Kizzuwadna was probably created under Hurrian influence. Hurrians settled in the region in large numbers. And an alliance which Idrimi, vassal ruler of the Mitannian king Parattarna, drew up with Kizzuwadna's king Pilliya, had the potential for substantially increasing Hurrian military penetration into Anatolia from the south-east. This seriously intensified the Hurrian threat, or more specifically the Mitannian threat, not merely to the security of the Hittites' eastern subject territories, but to Hatti's very heartland, already shown to be highly vulnerable to a determined, aggressive enemy.

But Mitanni had another rival to contend with as well. The triumphant Syrian campaigns of the pharaoh Tuthmosis I undoubtedly constituted a direct challenge to the burgeoning empire of Mitanni. But the failure of the pharaoh's immediate successors, Tuthmosis II and Hatshepsut, to follow up his military successors with a more permanent form of control over the conquered regions gave Mitanni sufficient breathing space to pursue further its own imperial ambitions in Syria and eastern Anatolia.

With the renewal of Egyptian campaigns in Syria under Tuthmosis III, Mitanni's territorial holdings once more came under serious threat. No doubt seeing Tuthmosis as some kind of liberator from the threat of Mitannian despotism, Hatti, Assyria and Babylon all hastened to establish diplomatic relations with him, sending him gifts and tribute. But his conquests, like those of the first Tuthmosis, were of little lasting effect in consolidating Egyptian authority in Syria. Serious challenges to the king's own personal authority in the regions of his conquests were clearly evident by his seventeenth and last campaign, essentially an attempt to put down rebellion in the central Syrian towns of Tunip and Kadesh. In Mitanni a vigorous and able new king, Shaushtatar, had now occupied the throne (*circa* 1430/20). The rebellions against Tuthmosis may well have had his support. And under his direction Mitanni was soon to reach the height of its power and influence within the Near Eastern world.

Freed from the threat of further Egyptian interference in his programme of territorial expansion, Shaushtatar invaded Assyria, sacking and looting its traditional capital Ashur. He then struck westwards across the Euphrates, gathering beneath his sway all the northern Syrian states as he carried his arms to the Mediterranean coast. He may have looked to extending his power further to the south, possibly into Palestine. But much of southern Syria still lay within the Egyptian sphere of influence. Undoubtedly Shaushtatar was attracted by the prospects of incorporating within his empire an even greater swathe of territory,

in regions like Palestine where there was probably already a substantial Hurrian population. But any move he might have made in this direction had to be weighed up with its inevitable consequence—war with Egypt, which under Tuthmosis' successors still exercised considerable authority in the states of southern Syria. Initial prospects for Mitannian military successes against Egyptian forces in the region may have been very good. But the long-term risks were substantial.

Shaushtatar had faced no serious obstacles in the rapid extension of his power in northern Syria. Neither Assyria nor Kassite Babylon would offer any threat to his expansion west of the Euphrates. The only major state likely to oppose him was Hatti. But the Hittite kingdom had not yet fully regained its status as a major international power. It had certainly, by now, recovered many of the Anatolian territories lost to it in the turbulent period following Mursili's assassination, but it still lacked the capacity to resume the military operations of its early kings in the Syrian region. Yet Hatti had proved how resilient it could be in the face of foreign aggression. It was only a matter of time before it would turn with renewed interest to re-establishing its presence in northern Syria. Inevitably this would mean conflict with Mitanni. If at that time Mitanni was also at war with Egypt, it would be caught between two powerful enemies, one contesting its supremacy in the north, the other determined to repel its territorial ambitions in the south.

Considerations such as these almost certainly prompted the Mitannian king Artatama I, successor and probably the son of Shaushtatar, to enter into negotiations with the pharaoh Amenhotep II over an alliance. Clearly any such alliance would require agreement between the two kingdoms on the boundaries of their respective spheres of authority. For Mitanni this would mean abandoning its territorial ambitions in southern Syria. Egypt would thus be guaranteed unchallenged overlordship in the region, while conceding to the Mitannians all territories in the north where Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III had triumphantly campaigned. There were, apparently, a number of sticking points in the negotiations, with the Egyptians proposing alternative terms to those offered by Mitanni. No doubt the whole process was flavoured by the parties' suspicion and distrust of each other. It was not until a new pharaoh, Tuthmosis IV, ascended the throne of Egypt that agreement was finally reached with Artatama, and sealed by a marriage alliance.[33] By the terms of the treaty which was now drawn up, the frontier between the two kingdoms gave Egypt control northwards to Kadesh on the Orontes river, and to Amurru and Ugarit along the coast. All territory beyond these was conceded to Mitanni.

The treaty enabled Artatama to consolidate his hold over northern Syria, with little immediate prospect of a challenge from Hatti—for at this time Hatti was increasingly occupied with serious threats to its own home territories. As we have seen, these threats culminated in the devastating concentric invasions of the homeland during Tudhaliya III's reign. That gave Mitanni virtually a free hand in northern Syria, for the time being. But the Hittites' rapid recovery under

Tudhaliya's son Suppiluliuma saw a renewal of the long-simmering rivalry between Hatti and Mitanni. The substantially overlapping spheres of interest of both powers precluded any possibility of a diplomatic resolution of their conflicting territorial claims of the kind that had been negotiated between Mitanni and Egypt. Hatti and Mitanni were now on a final collision course.

Unfortunately for Mitanni, just as it was being confronted by the most skilful and determined of all Hittite warrior-kings, its ruling elite was seriously divided by intra-dynastic rivalries. Artatama was succeeded by his son Shuttarna II, who may have expanded even further Mitanni's territorial holdings, into the region called Isuwa in the far north. But shortly after his death his son and successor Artashumara was assassinated, paving the way for the accession of his younger brother Tushratta. There was another rival claimant for the throne, a second Artatama, who had considerable support among the Mitannian population and actually called himself king.

Suppiluliuma saw the situation as ripe for exploitation. He may have suffered an early military defeat at the hands of Tushratta—sufficient to indicate that he was dealing with a formidable enemy and that ultimate success over Mitanni would require effective diplomatic activity as well as success on the battlefield. He thus entered into negotiations with Artatama. In the resulting treaty (which has not survived) Suppiluliuma no doubt acknowledged Artatama as the 'legitimate' Great King of Mitanni and promised to support his claims to his kingdom's throne once Tushratta was defeated. We do not know what support or promises Artatama may have given Suppiluliuma in return, or indeed what contribution his agreement with him may have made to the Hittites' ultimate triumph. Suppiluliuma's brilliant one-year Syrian campaign clearly paved the way for this triumph, although Tushratta eluded him when he marched into the Mitannian royal capital, and the final destruction of the Mitannian kingdom involved the Hittites in a number of additional campaigns over a period of twelve more years. The end came with the Hittite conquest of Carchemish, the final Mitannian stronghold, and the assassination of Tushratta by one of his sons.

The destruction of Mitanni as a Great Kingdom left a political vacuum east of the Euphrates which Mitanni's one-time subject Assyria hastened to fill, under its king Ashur-uballit. Troops from both Assyria and the kingdom of Alshe descended upon and sacked what was left of Mitanni and divided the northern part of the former kingdom between them. For Suppiluliuma, this was a worrying if entirely predictable outcome of his victory. By destroying one enemy of Hatti, he had provided the opportunity for the emergence of another—who in a very short time would prove equally dangerous. Suppiluliuma could have had few illusions about the threat posed to Hittite interests, particularly in Syria, by a resurgent Assyrian kingdom.

This threat might, however, be offset by a new Mitannian king, put upon the throne of a territorially much-reduced kingdom of Mitanni—as a puppet of Hittite interests. No doubt this was Suppiluliuma's prime intention in an agreement he had earlier made to support the accession of Artatama ('II') or his

chosen heir once Tushratta had been disposed of. However, Artatama and his son Shuttarna III had subsequently shown very disturbing pro-Assyrian leanings. They supported the Assyrians in their onslaught upon the Mitannian capital Washshuganni and other Mitannian cities in the wake of the Hittite victory, and subsequently sent the Assyrian king valuable gifts, including the rich booty which their predecessor Shaushtatar I had seized from Ashur some six decades or so earlier. The last thing Suppiluliuma could have wanted was a pro-Assyrian ruler on the throne from which Tushratta had been driven. If the remnants of the Mitannian kingdom fell within the Assyrian sphere of influence, Hittite subject territories west of the Euphrates, particularly the city and territory of Carchemish now established as a Hittite viceregal kingdom, would be at serious risk.

Hence Suppiluliuma reneged on the deal he had made with Shuttarna's father. Instead, he threw his support behind a son of Tushratta. This son, Kili-Teshub, may have been responsible for his father's murder and had subsequently fled to Babylonia. But he was denied refuge there, and turned finally to Suppiluliuma. Assured of Kili-Teshub's loyalty, Suppiluliuma married him to one of his daughters, then sent him to Carchemish to prepare for a joint campaign across the Euphrates with the Hittite prince Sharri-Kushuh, viceroy of Carchemish. The Hittite and Mitannian princes encountered little resistance. Kili-Teshub, bound by marriage to the royal family of Hatti, was established on the throne of the rump kingdom of Mitanni. He now adopted the throne-name Shattiwaza.

As we might expect, this dramatic *volte-face* by Suppiluliuma met with vigorous protests from Shattiwaza's unseated predecessor. Shuttarna could well claim that the Hittite king had flagrantly violated the terms of the treaty he had made with his father Artatama. In accordance with these terms, Shuttarna had every right to expect Hittite support in claiming his kingdom's throne. Instead, Suppiluliuma had backed the son of Tushratta—the upstart, Artatama's bitter rival and for many years the Hittites' arch-enemy. Yet justice was not entirely on Shuttarna's side. Suppiluliuma might well have claimed that the Mitannian's collaboration with Assyria rendered null and void any agreement made with his father. But that aside, Suppiluliuma was never one to let promises he had made, or indeed any considerations of honour, loyalty or fair play, stand in the way of the achievement of his objectives.

Mitanni had by now clearly ceased to be eligible for ranking amongst the Great Kingdoms, its place being taken on the international stage by its increasingly powerful Assyrian neighbour—to a very large extent a by-product of the military successes of Suppiluliuma. The remains of Mitanni, generally referred to from this time as the kingdom of Hanigalbat, fell increasingly under Assyrian control. During the reign of Shattiwaza's (probable) successor Shattuara I, Hanigalbat was reduced to Assyrian vassal status. While its relations with Assyria fluctuated in the final decades of the Bronze Age, beginning with a rebellion by Shattuara's son Wasashatta, it could no longer count on any support, or at least any serious support, from Hatti in attempts to assert its independence from Assyrian control.

The last Hittite kings relinquished to Assyria, reluctantly or otherwise, virtually all claims to sovereignty over what was left of the once great Mitannian empire.

Notes

1. For a relatively detailed account of these kingdoms, see Kuhrt (1995: vol I). Roux (1980) is a still useful source of reference on the Mesopotamian kingdoms, though his treatment of them is fairly cursory and now somewhat out of date.
2. The Assyrian royal inscriptions of the second millennium provide the most important source material for Assyrian history in this period; see Grayson (1972).
3. For a still very useful treatment of the Assyrian colony period, see Larsen (1976).
4. Note that this and all other dates below are approximate. For the reigns of Shamshi-Adad and his sons, see also Villard (1995).
5. Thus Villard (1995:875).
6. The letters have most recently been published in 3 vols by Durand (1997, 1998, 2000).
7. The document appears in Dossin (1938:117). The translation given here is by Charpin (1995:816).
8. *EA* 9:31–5.
9. Which, as Kuhrt (1995:109) points out, gave him at one stroke control over Isin, Uruk, Ur and Nippur, as well as the sizable dominions of Larsa.
10. Sealand territory was reincorporated into the Babylonian kingdom in the subsequent century under the Kassite dynasty.
11. For other suggested locations for their homeland, see Kuhrt (1995:333).
12. For accounts of the Kassite dynasty, see Oates (1986:83–104), Kuhrt (1995: 332–48) and Sommerfeld (1995).
13. For the most recent comprehensive treatment of Egyptian history, see Shaw (2000).
14. On the evidence indicating Asiatic settlement in Egypt already during the Middle Kingdom, see Bourriau (2000:187–8).
15. See Tubb (1998:62).
16. 'Hyksos' is a Greek vocalization (adopted by Manetho, *Aegyptiaca*, frag. 42, 1.75–79.2, quoted by Josephus in the late 1st century CE) of the Egyptian term '*hekau khasut*', which means 'rulers of foreign countries'. For a comprehensive treatment of the period of Hyksos rule in Egypt, see Redford (1992:98–122).
17. The name by which Upper Nubia was commonly designated, and sometimes used in reference to Nubia as a whole.
18. Its minerals included substantial deposits of gold, copper, amethyst and diorite.
19. He was the son of Isis, a secondary wife of Tuthmosis II.
20. He was the son of Mutemwiya, a secondary wife of Tuthmosis IV. For an overview of his reign, see Berman (1998).
21. The likely dates of his sole reign, leaving aside the question of whether he had a period of co-regency with his father, Amenhotep III.
22. See Murnane's summary of views (1995:1–2). For general accounts of Akhenaten and his reign, see Redford (1984) and Reeves (2001).
23. For a survey of Egypt's relations with the Near Eastern world in general during the last century of the Late Bronze Age, see Redford (2000).

24 For general accounts of the pharaoh Ramesses II, who will figure prominently in this book, see Kitchen (1982, 1995), Tyldesley (2001).
25 For the most recent edition of the treaty, see Edel (1997).
26 For the most recent comprehensive treatments of Hittite history, see Bryce (1998) and Klengel 1999).
27 *CTH* 19, most recently ed. Hoffmann (1984).
28 Scholars are still undecided as to whether he was preceded by one or two kings called Tudhaliya. To avoid confusion, the convention is to assume that there were two.
29 For more detailed treatments of the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni, see Wilhelm (1989) and Kuhrt (1995:289–300).
30 See Kuhrt (1995:297).
31 A possible identification between the former and the site of mod. Tell Feherije has been suggested; see Klengel (1999:96, n. 6) with refs cited therein.
32 See Wilhelm (1989:24).
33 *EA* 29:16–18.

2
THE INTERACTION OF THE PLAYERS
Imperial administration and international relationships

Managing the subject territories

At almost any given point in the Late Bronze Age, almost every part of the Near Eastern world, extending across Anatolia, through Mesopotamia, Syria, Palestine and Egypt, fell within the sphere of authority of one or other of the Great Kingdoms. There were a number of similarities in the means used by the Great Kings to maintain control over their subject territories. But there were also marked differences.

Each kingdom had its own core territory, where its capital was located and where its rule was most direct. The inhabitants of these core territories might be thought of as the kingdom's prime subjects, who supplied the aristocracy and the leading members of the king's administration and militia, and who at all levels of society no doubt saw themselves as superior to the subjects of conquered lands. Each kingdom had its own official language, though this was but one of a number of languages spoken throughout it, and not necessarily the most widely spoken one. Nor was the predominant ethnic element of a kingdom's population necessarily the same as that of its ruling elite. Late Bronze Age Babylon was ruled by a line of Kassite kings of foreign origin. The dynasty which ruled Hatti may have originated from one of a number of ethnic groups, and probably not the largest one, inhabiting the Hittite homeland. The kingdom of Mitanni too may have had an elite ruling class of different ethnic origin to that of the majority of the population which occupied the various parts of the kingdom.[1]

Beyond their homelands, the Great Kings held sway over a number of subject territories usually acquired through military conquest. These territories consisted of vassal or client kingdoms which by and large were administered by rulers of local origin. Provided they met the obligations which their subject status imposed upon them, they were generally allowed considerable latitude in the management of their state's or city's affairs. In the treaties which Hittite kings drew up with their vassal rulers, the obligations of both overlord and vassal were clearly defined. These treaties were in the nature of personal contracts, not between two kingdoms or governments, but between two individuals—Great King and vassal. The provision of military support when called upon and the annual payment of

tribute were amongst the most common requirements imposed upon the vassal. In return the vassal was guaranteed the support of his overlord in the event that his country was attacked or his position on his throne imperilled. His overlord also guaranteed succession to the vassal throne in his family line.[2]

Whether the pharaohs ever drew up similar agreements with any of their vassal rulers remains uncertain, for no documents attesting these have as yet been found.[3] The fact that Egyptian officials were more directly involved than Hittite officials in the local administrations (see below) may have made them rather less necessary. Yet the lack of formal contracts spelling out both a vassal's obligations to the pharaoh and the support he could expect from him in return may well have led to misunderstandings between overlord and vassal. This, perhaps, explains a number of the complaints in the Amarna correspondence by disappointed vassals who had failed to gain from the pharaoh the assistance and resources which they believed they could reasonably call upon in times of need. The complaints did not always go unanswered. Occasionally they met with an irate rejoinder from the pharaoh, reprimanding the complainants for constantly pestering him, for their failure to act on their own initiative, to take responsibility for their own affairs or to act on orders previously delivered to them. A formal statement of the expectations and obligations of each party might well have proved beneficial to both overlord and vassal.

The degree to which overlords intervened in their subjects' affairs varied from kingdom to kingdom, and sometimes from one state or city to another within a kingdom. Hittite kings rarely stationed their own personnel in their vassal states, for logistical reasons much more than for reasons of diplomatic sensitivity. Very occasionally a Hittite garrison might be based in a vassal kingdom, but only if this were made necessary by serious instability in the region or because the kingdom lay within a strategically important zone vulnerable to enemy incursion. Chronic shortages of manpower and the need to have all military resources readily available, for major campaigns abroad or for the protection of the homeland and its frontiers, discouraged Hittite kings from permanently stationing their troops in any subject territory if a Hittite military presence there was not deemed essential.

In Egypt's vassal states in Syria—Palestine, which were grouped for administrative purposes into a number of 'provinces',[4] Egyptian personnel, both civilian and military, were more directly involved. Here too the local royal houses continued to hold authority, and the existing administrative structures and political institutions were left largely unchanged.[5] But the local administrations were subject to supervision by officials of the pharaoh, sometimes called 'commissioners' (Akkadian *rābisu,* Canaanite *sokinu*), whose duties included the collection of tribute and taxes from the local rulers. Some of these officials were of Canaanite stock, but the majority were native Egyptians. During the Amarna period, commissioners exercised a roving brief as circuit officials, with authority delegated to them by the pharaoh over a number of towns within a particular district. Overall responsibility for the maintenance of Egyptian authority in Syria

—Palestine lay in the hands of an official with the title ‘overseer of all northern (foreign) lands’. In his capacity as the pharaoh’s chief representative in the region, the supervision of the local vassal rulers was presumably one of his prime responsibilities.

Resident Egyptian governors were regularly appointed to the major garrison cities, such as Gaza, Kumidi (identified with the site of Kamid el-Loz in the Beqa’ Valley of southern Lebanon), Sumur (Greek Simyra), Megiddo and Beth Shan (both in the Jezreel Valley of northern Palestine). These fortified urban centres served as the governors’ headquarters for the exercise of their authority over the towns assigned to them. Their appointment entailed both civil and military functions, though the prime responsibility for the latter fell to specifically appointed military officers, who had small contingents of chariotry and infantry or detachments of archers under their command.[7] It was the local ruler’s responsibility to ensure that they were adequately provisioned. ‘When the troops and chariots of my lord have come here,’ wrote Akizzi, king of Qatna, to Akhenaten, ‘food, strong drink, oxen, sheep, and goats, honey and oil, were produced for the troops and chariots of my lord.’[8]

There is still some uncertainty about how large or how permanent the Egyptian presence was in these subject territories. We can hardly doubt, however, that it was the cause of some tensions between the Egyptian administration and the local princes and subject populations. This surfaces a number of times in the Amarna letters. On the other hand, there were occasions when a local ruler actually asked the pharaoh to make available to him a garrison of Egyptian troops, for peacekeeping or policing purposes, or to protect his territory against an aggressive neighbour. Undoubtedly Egyptian rule brought with it some benefits. But the once independent kingdoms of Syria-Palestine were left with no illusions about their reduced status. The pharaoh emphasized and insisted upon their leaders’ subservience to his own officials, and the native rulers of the smaller cities were referred to in Akkadian merely by the term *hazannu*, ‘mayor’. Professor Redford remarks that they were thus demoted to the status of the local mayors in Egypt, and the same taxes and services were demanded from them as from their Egyptian counterparts.[9]

The pharaoh may well have felt that the multitude of Asiatic princelings who ruled tiny fiefdoms deserved no greater level of recognition. According to Tuthmosis III, no less than 300 princes, mainly from Palestine, fought against him at the battle of Megiddo. Once subjected to Egyptian sovereignty, the local rulers were obliged to send their sons to Egypt, so that they could be suitably ‘educated’, or indoctrinated in Egyptian ways, as preparation for their own possible assumption of power in the regions whence they came. During their sojourn in the Egyptian court they were in effect hostages, providing the pharaoh with a guarantee of their fathers’ good behaviour. The practice had begun with Tuthmosis III, who reported thus: ‘Now the children of the chiefs and their brothers were brought to be hostages in Egypt; and as for any of these chiefs that died, His Majesty used to have his son assume his post.’[10]

Certain vassals of the Great Kings were sometimes accorded a higher status and allowed greater scope for exercising their initiative, especially those who could play a significant role in protecting and possibly expanding their overlord's territorial interests. Idrimi, vassal of the Mitannian king Parattarna, was a case in point.[11] Son of the former king of Aleppo, Idrimi had been forced by rebellion to flee his country and spent seven years in exile. After establishing Mitannian sovereignty over Aleppo, Parattarna had given his backing to the fugitive, drawn up a treaty with him and installed him as a vassal ruler in his father's former kingdom, now much reduced in size. The new royal seat was located at Alalah (mod. Tell Açana). Idrimi wasted no time in proving his worth. After conquering seven towns on the periphery of Hittite subject territory he concluded a treaty with Pilliya, king of the strategically important kingdom of Kizzuwadna in south-eastern Anatolia. He did so with the blessing of his overlord, for the treaty was signed under Parattarna's authority. It must have served to intensify the Mitannian threat to the kingdom of Hatti, and no doubt this was one of Idrimi's principal objects in concluding it. Parattarna clearly saw his vassal as an important agent for the extension of Mitannian influence in Anatolia, and had little hesitation in backing his enterprises. Indeed he may have initiated them.

So too Suppiluliuma I had given his backing to the refugee Mitannian prince Kili-Teshub, later Shattiwaza, son of the vanquished Tushratta, providing him with the military support necessary to regain his father's throne from his Assyrian-backed rival Shuttarna. The rump Mitannian kingdom whose throne he now occupied was accorded *kuirwana*, or 'protectorate' status by the Hittites. This status, rarely bestowed, acknowledged Shattiwaza's importance in protecting Hittite interests in his region against the encroaching Assyrian menace. It elevated its ruler above the position of a mere vassal, as recognized ceremonially on his visits to the Hittite capital and practically in the granting of certain privileges, such as exemption from tribute and in some cases the right to annex territory won from the enemy. But in most respects the ruler of such a state had little more independence than a vassal, and above all no right to enter into independent relations with foreign powers. He was in effect a puppet of the Hittite king.

Kizzuwadna too had become a *kuirwana* state of the Hittite kingdom. Like other countries and regions, it passed through various stages in its political development and in its political and military attachments. Once part of the Hittite Old Kingdom, it had established its independence from Hatti, entered into alliances at different times with both Mitanni and Hatti, joined the Hittite fold as a *kuirwana* state, and finally been annexed to Hittite territory and placed under direct Hittite rule.

Across the Euphrates, Hanigalbat (what remained of the former Mitannian kingdom) underwent a similar process. From a theoretically independent state in alliance with Hatti, with *kuirwana* status, it had fallen increasingly under Assyrian influence, and was reduced to vassal status by the Assyrian king Adad-

nirari I after its king Shattuara I had launched a quixotic and predictably unsuccessful attack on his territory. A rebellion subsequently led by Shattuara's son and successor Wasashatta was also crushed by Adad-nirari, who now seems to have taken the opportunity to replace Hanigalbat's vassal status with outright annexation, establishing an Assyrian royal residence in the city of Taide.

The pattern of conflict and conquest followed by annexation can also be seen in the lands of the Nile. Raids led by Kamose, last king of the seventeenth dynasty, into the land of Kush, which had allied itself with the Hyksos, had paved the way for the more extensive southern campaigns conducted by the early eighteenth dynasty pharaohs Amenhotep I and Tuthmosis I. All the lands conquered by them were annexed. Thus, already in the early New Kingdom the territories incorporated into Egypt and directly ruled by the pharaoh covered the entire region of Nubia. This was in contrast to the complex of Egypt's Asiatic subject states, which, as we have noted, retained a relatively high degree of autonomy under rulers of local origin.[12]

Egypt's southern territories were placed under the immediate control of a viceroy, appointed by and directly answerable to the pharaoh. He was known as the King's Son Of Kush and Overseer of the Southern Lands. The region for which he was responsible extended southwards from the third nome in Upper Egypt to Kurgus, which lay upstream of the Fourth Cataract. It thus incorporated the whole of Lower and Upper Nubia. Viceroys also made their appearance in the Hittite world, from the reign of Suppiluliuma I onwards. Following his destruction of Tushratta's empire, Suppiluliuma appointed two of his sons to viceregal posts in Carchemish and Aleppo. These appointments marked a significant development in Hittite foreign policy. For the first time in the history of the Hittite kingdom, direct rule was imposed over territories lying beyond the homeland. Between them the viceroys, who were invariably descendants of the Great King, exercised in Syria the latter's most important military, judicial and political functions, and often dealt directly on his behalf with the local vassal rulers.

More than 400 years earlier the Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad had similarly appointed his sons Ishme-Dagan and Yasmah-Addu to viceregal positions, at Ekallatum and Mari, his kingdom's most important regional centres. Both the Hittite and the Assyrian appointments were in part a reflection of the strategic significance of the cities where they were made. They also served to convey to the cities themselves a clear acknowledgment of their distinguished status. This had in the past set them above many of their neighbours, and in the future would continue to be acknowledged through their designation as viceregal centres of power.

Babylonia was the most geographically compact of the Great Kingdoms. Under Kassite rule it was divided into a number of administrative regions or provinces, each under the control of a governor, who resided in one of the kingdom's large urban centres. Directly answerable to the king, he had overall responsibility for the collection of taxes on grain, livestock and various

commodities such as wood from the surrounding rural districts. He was also responsible for the provisioning and housing of troops, as well as for the public works projects in his region, including the construction of bridges and city walls and the maintenance of canals.

Inscriptions on boundary stones, called *kudurrus*, indicate that the Kassite dynasty introduced into Babylonia the practice of making land-grants to a wide range of officials, including courtiers, priests and military officers, and occasionally to members of the royal family. Hittite kings had adopted a similar practice. The grants rewarded those who had served the king well in one or more capacities, and helped ensure their continuing loyalty to the crown. They also helped ensure maximum productivity of the land within the king's disposal, and thus revenue through taxation for the royal coffers or estates, except in cases where the grantees were explicitly exempted from such obligations.

Babylonia flourished under the stable, highly centralized rule of the Kassite kings. Largely because of its compactness, and the apparent lack of ambition on the part of its rulers to extend its domains, it experienced few of the problems which contemporary Great Kingdoms encountered in maintaining their control over their far-flung subject territories. Its rulers enjoyed the benefits that came with recognition of peer status by their 'royal brothers', without having to pay in military terms the high costs which the achievement and maintenance of such status normally entailed. And although the rise of its neighbour Assyria led to increasing tensions and occasional conflict between the two kingdoms, these had little effect on Babylonia's stability and prosperity until the final decades of the Late Bronze Age.

Managing international relationships

We have remarked that throughout the Late Bronze Age most parts of the ancient Near Eastern world were dominated by one or other of the major powers. Thus, at the peak of its military successes in the reign of Tuthmosis III, Egypt claimed sovereignty over a vast region extending from Upper Nubia in the south through Palestine and Syria to the western fringe of Mesopotamia. Shortly afterwards, the kingdom of Mitanni rose to prominence, becoming the supreme power in northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria and seriously threatening Hittite interests in eastern Anatolia. With Suppiluliuma's destruction of Mitanni as an independent kingdom in the fourteenth century, Hatti became indisputably the most powerful of the Great Kingdoms. In the reign of Suppiluliuma's son Mursili II the territories subject to the Hittite Great King extended from the Aegean coast eastwards across the face of Anatolia,[13] through former Mitannian territory in northern Syria to the Euphrates region, where the former Mitannian stronghold of Carchemish had become a Hittite viceregal seat. Assyria replaced Mitanni as Hatti's most serious threat. It absorbed all that remained of the Mitannian kingdom east of the Euphrates, and may well have set its sights on westward expansion through Hittite territory in Syria to the Mediterranean coast.

But disputes with its southern neighbour Babylon led its king, Tukulti-Ninurta I, to turn his attention in that direction, and he succeeded in incorporating Babylonia, for a brief time, into his kingdom.

It is clear, then, that in terms of the great powers' territorial holdings, the geopolitical scene was a constantly changing one. Snapshots taken of this scene no more than a few years apart can differ dramatically. Arguably the most stable period came about with the signing of the famous treaty between Egypt and Hatti in the middle of the thirteenth century. By that time, Mitanni's membership of the Great Kings' club had long since been terminated and all four of the current members, including the Assyrian Adad-nirari I, were apparently on diplomatic speaking terms with each of their three royal peers. Hatti and Egypt were undoubtedly the most powerful kingdoms of the period. Relations between the pharaoh Ramesses and King Hattusili were sometimes strained even after the treaty. But in the short term at least there was virtually no threat of war breaking out between them. Most importantly, agreement had been reached over the territorial limits of their respective spheres of influence. The long-disputed states of Kadesh and Amurru had been tacitly conceded by Ramesses to the Hittites. Egypt, on the other hand, retained control over much of Palestine, together with a coastal strip which extended northwards to the city of Sumur, and the inland territories from Damascus southwards. Both parties to the treaty recognized and respected the other's frontiers.

Even in the centuries preceding the treaty, all-out warfare between the Great Kingdoms was a relatively rare phenomenon—this in a world where warfare was endemic, where peace, not war, was an aberration from the norm. Great Kings were expected to demonstrate their prowess on the field of battle and to acquire booty, in goods, livestock and human beings, as payment for their troops, as thank-offerings for their gods and as a means of refilling the state's coffers, restocking its agricultural estates, replenishing its labour forces. To emulate the military achievements of one's illustrious predecessors was an integral part of the ideology of kingship. Wars were fought to extend territorial boundaries, sometimes purely in the spirit of aggressive imperialism, sometimes to gain access to or control of valuable trade routes, sometimes to defend frontier zones and food-producing lands against a hostile neighbour.

But instances where the Great Kings fought each other were few and far between. The notable exception was the more or less constant state of war between the kings of Hatti and Mitanni, which ended with Suppiluliuma's decisive defeat of Tushratta. Apart from this, we have noted the two engagements at Kadesh fought by the Hittite king Muwatalli II, the first against the pharaoh Seti I, the second against his son and successor Ramesses II. We have also noted the major defeat inflicted by the Assyrian Tukulti-Ninurta I on the troops of his Hittite counterpart Tudhaliya IV at the battle of Nihriya. Certainly there were other skirmishes from time to time between the great powers, and occasional military operations conducted by one Great King into the subject territory of another. And in the last decades of the Late Bronze Age hostilities

flared on a number of occasions between Assyria and Babylon. Yet in a world geared to constant military conflict, with no less than four Great Kings in any one period seeking to establish their authority and maintain their influence in territories in which they had a common interest, and which often lay between them, it may seem remarkable that major showdowns between these kings occurred so rarely. How do we explain this?

In the late third and early second millennium, the Near Eastern world had already witnessed a succession of imperial enterprises, beginning with the empire established by the Akkadian king Sargon, followed a century after its collapse by that established by Ur Nammu, founder of the Ur III dynasty. In the early second millennium a number of kingdoms had risen, competed with one another for supremacy in the regions of northern Mesopotamia and Syria, and within a brief space of time disappeared. Even the most powerful of these—Shamshi-Adad's Assyria, Hammurabi's Babylon and Yamhad, with its royal seat at Aleppo—flourished but briefly before their decline and fall. Memories of Great Kingdoms and great rulers of the past were preserved in succeeding generations and in the traditions of later kingdoms. The Hittite king Hattusili I measured his achievements against those of the mighty Sargon, and the exploits of Sargon's son and successor Naram-Sin became firmly entrenched in later folklore. By his destruction of both Aleppo and Babylon the Hittite king Mursili I won himself a distinguished place in Hittite military tradition. By the unprecedented military glory he won for his kingdom and himself in his Syrian campaigns, Tuthmosis III served as a model for all subsequent warrior-pharaohs.

Yet those who admired and sought to emulate the great rulers of the past must also have been very conscious of the ephemerality of their achievements. All that the great men accomplished had been lost, sometimes almost as soon as their own reigns had come to an end. The message to succeeding generations of kings was clear. Success on the field of battle, no matter how complete or decisive, did not in itself provide a firm foundation for the establishment of permanent authority over newly won lands. Earlier kingdoms had fallen because they had lacked the resources, the experience and the expertise necessary to consolidate and maintain control over their conquests for any length of time. They also lacked the skills and probably also the will to negotiate with neighbouring powers over competing territorial claims. Diplomatic interaction between rival kingdoms jostling for supremacy in the same regions might have helped ensure a longer lease of life for many of them.

Their successors in the Late Bronze Age had the benefit of hindsight. The aspirations of the kings of this age to achieve great-power status were no less. But were there not ways for a Great King to satisfy his personal ambitions and secure his kingdom's interests and influence beyond his homeland without conflict with his foreign peers? Political and diplomatic activity might achieve as much as if not more than brute military force, and at far less cost. Moreover, for all their admiration of a Tuthmosis, later Egyptian pharaohs well knew that the times of their kingdom's greatest material prosperity were those when military

adventures were kept to a minimum, as in the reigns of Hatshepsut and Amenhotep III. Those were the times when the pharaohs left the most tangible and the most lasting monuments to their reigns.

The locations of the Great Kingdoms also influenced the relations between them. Pharaoh's homeland was far removed from the core territories of his fellow Great Kings. Egypt and Mitanni both had a major interest in the large expanse of Syro-Palestinian territory which lay between their homelands, and initially this had brought them into conflict. But conflict gave way to negotiation and agreement when both accepted that the disputed region was sufficiently large for it to be divided between them, allowing each of them substantial blocks of territories and, importantly, control over resource-rich areas along the Mediterranean coast. Hatti replaced Mitanni as Egypt's main contender for control over Syria. But Hatti had no serious territorial aspirations south of the Damascus region; and after Tuthmosis III Egypt had little interest in the inland regions to its north. For some time the states of Amurru and Kadesh, which lay in the frontier zones between the two Great Kingdoms, had been hotly contested, as we have seen. But by conceding these to Hatti, Ramesses II removed any serious impediment to concluding an agreement with his Hittite brother, as reflected in the 'eternal treaty', which satisfied both kingdoms' territorial, strategic and economic interests. Kassite Babylon confined its territorial ambitions to Mesopotamia, and though the renascent Assyria was a potential threat to the Syrian states of Hatti, and possibly also of Egypt, it never (in this period) embarked on campaigns of territorial acquisition west of the Euphrates.

In general, the major kingdoms of the Late Bronze Age could and often did maintain a peaceful and co-operative co-existence—except, as we have noted, in the case of Hatti and Mitanni. From the very outset the two were on a regular war footing. Mitanni had welded together a coalition of vassal and allied states extending across northern Mesopotamia and northern Syria into eastern Anatolia. This effectively excluded Hatti from any significant presence in, or even access to, the Syrian region, intolerable for a major Near Eastern power. More serious still, the westward expansion of Mitanni put it within easy striking distance of the Hittite kingdom's heartland. There had long been a Hurrian presence in eastern Anatolia. Indeed it has been suggested that the original homeland of the Hurrian people lay in this region. Already in the reign of Hattusili I we hear of serious Hurrian attacks on the Hittite homeland, attacks which were to continue spasmodically through the reigns of his successors. Hatti would never be secure so long as there was a hostile Hurrian presence on its doorstep.

On the other hand, Mitanni would never concede territory that it considered an integral part of its kingdom. It would never willingly accept the intrusion of a foreign power into the array of northern Syrian states, many with Hurrian populations, which contributed much to the kingdom's strength, security and prosperity. But, on the Hittite side, both Hattusili I and his successor Mursili I had shown that Hatti would not accept foreign domination of northern Syria

which shut out all Hittite participation in the region. There was little if any scope for compromise, little if any room for diplomatic manoeuvre, particularly while the Mitannian throne was occupied by a king who was overtly hostile to Hatti. The result was the long drawn-out conflict between the two Great Kingdoms which terminated with the Hittite triumph and the elimination of Mitanni from the elite group of Great Kingdoms.

Geographical factors clearly had much to do with shaping the relations between the major powers. But there were other factors as well. We have noted that Great Kings could be expected to devote much of their time to military campaigns. For the most part these campaigns were directed against hostile local forces threatening their homeland or subject territories, or against rebels within these subject territories. The pharaoh might be required to conduct campaigns in Nubia (though this region remained relatively quiescent under viceregal rule) or against rebels in his Asiatic states. But the most serious problem he had to confront in defending his lands was the constant threat of incursions by Libyan groups from the west. He had also to defend his sea borders against raids by pirates, perhaps early forerunners of the Sea Peoples who attacked the Egyptian coast in the reigns of Merneptah and Ramesses III. Hittite kings led many campaigns against rebel territories and their allies in western Anatolia (in particular), and occasionally against rebel Syrian states. But they were also faced with the chronic problem of incursions into their homeland territory by the Kaska tribes from the Pontic zone to the north. These tribes were quick to exploit any period of perceived instability in Hatti or any occasion when Hittite military resources were heavily committed elsewhere to attack the homeland. Victories over rebels and local enemies were often sufficient to demonstrate a Great King's prowess as a military leader, particularly when these victories resulted in substantial booty. On the other hand, a major showdown with another Great King involved an enormous drain on a kingdom's resources,[14] without guarantee of success and with the homeland stripped of its defence forces and left dangerously exposed to enemies from other quarters. Far better for a Great King to husband these resources—for use whenever necessary against enemies closer to home—and resolve by diplomacy disputes with a fellow Great King before these disputes escalated into military conflict which might well be ruinous for both sides.

There were also significant material benefits that could flow from peaceful relations between the Great Kings, particularly in the area of trade and commerce. The Late Bronze Age was a period when international trade flourished within the Near Eastern world—which also had close commercial links with the Aegean world. The products of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece figured prominently in the international trading network, as illustrated by the trading sites dotted along the eastern Aegean and eastern Mediterranean coastlands, by the contents of the shipwrecks found off the southern coast of Anatolia, and by what we know of the great international emporia along the Levantine coast. While commercial enterprises often involved a considerable

element of risk, the volume and variety of goods traded in this period must reflect generally stable conditions for international trading purposes, which would not have been possible without the co-operation of the great powers which dominated the Near Eastern world.

One of the most important elements, indeed the key element, in the relations between the Great Kings was communication. Though as far as we know, none of the royal brothers ever met, they communicated regularly with each other by a variety of means, both written and oral. The letter was the single most important form of communication. In fact, it was one of the essential basic tools used in the establishment and maintenance of diplomatic relations between the Great Kings.

To this point we have been sketching in the historical and political background of the Late Bronze Age Great Kingdoms. It is time now to turn to the royal correspondence of the age, and the crucial role which it played in the world of international diplomacy.

Notes

1 Though, as we noted in Chapter 1, the ethnic origin of the Mitannian ruling elite is still open to debate.

2 For a representative collection of Hittite treaties, see Beckman (1996:11–118).

3 Cf. the comments of Westbrook (2000:38), Murnane (2000:104–5), James (2000: 113), Na'aman (2000:137–8).

4 The number suggested ranges from two to four; see Moran (1992:xxvi with n. 70). In general on Egypt's administration of its Syro-Palestinian territories, see Redford (1992:192–213), Murnane (1998:178–81), Weinstein (1998:226–9).

5 In marked contrast to Egyptian rule in Nubia, where the old political structures were disbanded and the region was placed under the direct administration of an Egyptian viceroy; see below (pp. 46).

6 See Weinstein (1998:226–7).

7 In general on the use of garrison troops and archers in the Syro-Palestinian territories, see Gálan (1994:91–5).

8 *EA* 55, 10–13, trans. Moran.

9 See Redford (1984:25; 1992:198–9). But note Murnane (2000:107), who comments that 'this figurative description reflects only a partial truth, namely, the vassals' subordinate position under Egyptian control and not…their independence in most areas of community government (unlike their Egyptian counterparts)'. Cf. Na'aman (2000:131) 'Egypt and Canaan were separate entities and the vassals were never considered mayors in the full meaning of the term. The court administration treated them as Egyptian mayors in one important aspect: they held full responsibility for everything that happened in the town (or rather city-state) in their charge.'

10 *Urk* IV, 690, trans. Redford (1992:198).

11 Most of our information about Idrimi comes from his well-known inscription, most recently trans. by Dietrich and Loretz (1985).

12 Further on the contrast between Egyptian administration in Nubia and western Asia, see Murnane (1998:178–9).

13 There were, however, large parts of western Anatolia over which the Hittites never exercised more than tenuous authority, or any authority at all.

14 As evidenced by the enormous force of 47,500 troops which Muwatalli allegedly put into the field at Kadesh.

Part II

THE LETTERS AND THEIR THEMES

3
LETTERS AND MESSENGERS

The letters

The cuneiform tablets

In the ancient Near Eastern writing systems, symbols were impressed, cut, painted or scratched on a variety of materials. Monumental inscriptions were carved on rock faces, stone blocks including statue bases, and on palace, tomb and temple walls. The originals of important documents like treaties were sometimes inscribed on metal—bronze, silver or iron. Hinged wooden tablets were in common use, their surfaces recessed and coated with wax, though the types of documents for which they were used remain uncertain.[1] Papyrus was widely used in Egypt for administrative records as well as for a variety of other documents. In post-Bronze Age times economic documents and letters were written on strips of lead. Leather also provided a convenient writing surface. But from the time of the earliest written records in Mesopotamia clay was by far the most commonly used material for writing. The clay was generally shaped into rectangular tablets, sometimes with a slightly convex surface, but a number of other inscribed shapes are also found, including cones, circular sealings and figurines.

While still soft, clay provided a particularly suitable surface for the Near Eastern world's cuneiform scripts, whose symbols were formed by pressing the tip of a wedged-shaped stylus into the surface. Compared with documents recorded on other materials, those impressed in clay have a much higher survival rate. When baked, whether accidentally or by design, clay tablets are virtually indestructible. Some two centuries of excavations of Near Eastern sites have clearly demonstrated this. The numbers of tablets unearthed from these sites run into the hundreds of thousands.

Official documents preserved on clay were generally stored in tablet houses or archive rooms within palaces, temple complexes or other official repositories, unless intended for dispatch to a foreign king or vassal ruler or provincial official. When documents were sent elsewhere, copies of them were often made

before their dispatch and deposited in the archives for future reference, Preliminary drafts of documents have also come to light in tablet repositories. From these we often gain interesting insights into the compositional processes involved in the preparation of a document and the revisions through which it passed before a final version was produced.

Many types of documents on clay have surfaced in the course of excavations throughout the Near Eastern world—festival texts, hymns, prayers and incantations, compendia of laws, folktales, poems, treaties, protocols, instructions to royal officials, mythological and literary texts, annalistic records, proclamations and letters. Our prime interest will be in the last of these. Letters provided a regular means of communication within and between the Near Eastern kingdoms. Great Kings corresponded with their foreign counterparts, with viceregal sons, with vassal rulers, with officials appointed to provincial areas of their kingdoms. In the thirteenth century letters were frequently exchanged between various members of the Egyptian and Hittite royal families. Sons, daughters and wives of one Great King wrote to sons, daughters and wives of the other. Kings sometimes corresponded with foreign queens as well as with their husbands or sons. The Mitannian king Tushratta wrote to Tiye, chief wife of Amenhotep III and mother of Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten. Ramesses II regularly corresponded with the Hittite queen Puduhepa, wife of Hattusili III. Royal bureaucrats in the provinces wrote to officials in the capital, sometimes in postscripts appended to dispatches from the king. Scribes too sent short personal messages to fellow scribes in the recipient's court by way of appendages to His Majesty's letters.[2]

The scribes

As with other documents, scribes were responsible for actually putting on tablet the letters attributed to a particular king and reading those sent to him in return. Mastery of the scribal skills was a lengthy, rigorous process which involved the young student in many years of training in special establishments attached to temple or palace.[3] In Sumerian the scribal schools were designated by the term *eduba,* literally 'tablet house'. Both the Egyptian and cuneiform writing systems were highly complex, involving hundreds of symbols, many of which, at least in the cuneiform system, were barely distinguishable from one another. To judge from our Mesopotamian sources, the discipline imposed upon young students could be harsh, with beatings administered for lack of application, recalcitrance or incompetence. In both Egypt and the cuneiform world, the method of learning to read and write the script was by repeatedly copying out texts, progressing gradually from simple to more complex compositions.

Since only a tiny minority of a kingdom's population were literate (the estimate for Egypt is about 1 per cent), the scribal profession was a very select and specialized one, membership of it often being passed on within particular families from one generation to another. By and large the trainees seem to have

been drawn from a fairly elite social class in Mesopotamia, Syria and Anatolia, but from a broader cross-section of the populace in Egypt. With diligence and demonstrated ability student scribes had before them the prospect of a career which might eventually lead to some of the highest positions in their kingdom's administration, perhaps even a place within His Majesty's inner circle of advisers. Given the extensive bureaucracies of the Late Bronze Age kingdoms, there was undoubtedly a high demand for those trained in the scribal profession. No less than fifty-two scribes were employed in the Great Temple of the Storm God in the Hittite capital Hattusa, over a quarter of the temple's entire personnel. And apart from the scribes employed in the central administrations, numerous members of their profession were required for service in the kingdoms' regional centres. We shall be meeting a number of these. Scribes also accompanied their kings on military campaigns.

Is it possible to distinguish a class of career scribes from other literate members of the societies to which they belonged? This is not an altogether easy question to answer since, at least in some contexts, the term 'scribe' might be used of a number of persons whose professional activities went well beyond the purely scribal sphere. Doctors, ritualists and priests and probably all the highest-ranking officials in the royal administrations almost certainly had some degree of literacy—at least enough for the purposes of their partic-ular professional activities. Some of the pharaohs too appear to have been literate. It is less certain whether any of their foreign peers could claim this skill.

A hierarchy clearly operated within each kingdom's scribal profession. What is less clear is the extent to which the profession was compartmentalized, and, if it was, how rigid the compartments were. In Hittite texts, a fairly high degree of specialization is suggested by the term 'scribe of the wooden tablets'. But without knowing what precisely wooden tablets were used for, we cannot assess how broad or how narrow the wooden-tablet scribe's sphere of activity was. Some scribes may have spent their entire careers as journeyman clerks, copying texts, taking dictation, storing and retrieving archival material. Others reached more elevated levels in their profession, a few rising to the ranks of those who exercised considerable influence in their kingdom's political and administrative affairs.

Some of the highest-ranking scribes undoubtedly played a major role within the sphere of international relations and diplomatic activities. The adoption of Akkadian, or more precisely Babylonian,[4] in the Late Bronze Age as the language of international communication and diplomacy necessitated the services of bilingual if not tri—or multilingual scribes in the palace establishments of the Great Kings. We shall consider below the translation processes involved in an exchange of letters between two kings, neither of whom spoke the Akkadian language but both of whom used it in their correspondence. Those called upon to act as translators or interpreters may have been assigned to a particular delegation purely to carry out this task. But they were sometimes called upon to perform other services as well, such as anointing a foreign princess before she

left home to marry their king.[5] They may also have served as counsellors to their king, conferring with him on the contents of a letter received, advising him on an appropriate reply and preparing an initial draft of the reply—in the king's own language before the final version was drawn up. Effective performance of these tasks required of the counsellor not only a high order of diplomatic skills, but also an extensive knowledge of international current affairs.

The mechanics of communication

Before letters were dispatched, copies were made of all the important ones, particularly those exchanged between royal courts, and stored in an appropriate archive for future possible reference. This applied also to other important documents, like treaties with vassal and foreign kings. In some cases the letters with which we shall be dealing are the originals sent to the addressee; in other cases they are evidently copies retained by the sender. Unfortunately we are not in a position to compare copies with their originals, since we have only one or the other. When we find in a recipient's court a letter that has been addressed to him, then it is obviously an original letter. But if this letter is found in the sender's court, we generally assume that it is a copy made before the original was dispatched. In the great majority of cases this is probably a valid assumption. But, as we shall see, there are some exceptions.

No doubt there were many occasions when messengers carried a number of letters from one court to another, the batch of correspondence constituting a kind of diplomatic pouch which contained letters destined for various addressees from various senders. That certainly applied to the letters with almost identical contents addressed by the pharaoh Ramesses II to both the Hittite king Hattusili III and his wife Puduhepa, as well as to the correspondence exchanged between other members of their respective royal families.[6] Scribes might sometimes be commissioned to write a series of letters on similar topics and for simultaneous dispatch. Thus an Alasiyan scribe wrote a letter to the pharaoh on behalf of his king requesting that merchants from Alasiya[7] be exempted from customs duties; he then wrote a second letter for a high official in Alasiya, who sent the same request, presumably at the same time, to his counterpart in Egypt.[8]

We have referred in the preceding paragraph to one of the most important collections of letters to have come down to us from the Late Bronze Age: the correspondence exchanged between the courts of Egypt and Hatti during the reigns of Ramesses II and Hattusili III. As it happens, the entire surviving corpus of this material has been found in the archives of the Hittite capital. From this we might reasonably conclude that the letters addressed to the members of the Hittite court are *originals* sent from Egypt, whereas those also found in Hattusa but addressed to members of the Egyptian court are *copies* of letters dispatched to Egypt. Since none of the latter have come to light in Egypt, it is possible that some of the *apparent* copies are in fact originals which for one reason or another were never sent. That possibility applies also to letters found in the Amarna

archive which were addressed by the pharaoh to the kings of Babylon and Arzawa (the latter a kingdom in western Anatolia), and to those which he addressed to his vassals in Syria and Palestine.

Occasionally, however, a letter has come to light which is clearly neither an original nor a copy, but merely a preliminary draft, with numerous corrections made upon it for incorporating into a final version. We shall be referring several times to one of the most interesting and instructive of these—a draft of a letter which was (almost certainly) composed by the Queen Puduhepa and addressed to Ramesses.[9] No final version of the letter survives, and we cannot be entirely sure that it was not discarded, or at least toned down, before it reached a fair copy stage, for some of its rebukes directed at the addressee are exceptionally forthright. But in general we rely on copies or drafts of letters, whose originals are lost, as well as on actual originals in piecing together a picture of the relations between the senders and recipients of correspondence in the Late Bronze Age and the major issues and concerns with which their letters dealt.

We can also work out the contents of a number of letters which have not survived in any form from specific responses given to them in return letters from their recipients. Sometimes the latter reproduce in their replies phrases and sentences, word for word, from the original letters. This extremely useful practice —quoting extracts from the originals and giving point-for-point responses to them —enables us to reconstruct the queries, requests, comments or complaints of the first letter-writer.

A brief extract from Queen Puduhepa's draft letter to Ramesses illustrates this:

> As for what you, my brother, wrote to me: 'Thus my sister wrote to me: "When messengers travelled to visit the Babylonian princess who had been given (in marriage) to (the king of) Egypt, they were left standing outside!" It was Ellil-bel-nishe, the Babylonian king's own messenger, who informed me of this.'

Three letters are involved in this particular exchange. Only one of them, the third, still exists (and then only in draft form), but we can reconstruct from references in it part of the contents of its two predecessors. The sequence is as follows: in the first letter, Puduhepa had referred to a humiliation allegedly suffered by Babylonian envoys on a mission to Egypt to visit a Babylonian princess, now one of the pharaoh's wives. In the second letter, Ramesses had responded, quoting her allegation and apparently disputing it. In the third letter, Puduhepa responded to his response by claiming that her information had come directly from the Babylonian king's own envoy.

This is a very simple example of the practice to which we have referred. More complex examples will figure in our discussions below. It is therefore important to emphasize at the outset that some of the statements attributed to particular letter-writers in these discussions come not from their own letters but from

quotations in the replies of their correspondents. Clearly a great deal of Late Bronze Age royal correspondence has not survived, or has yet to be discovered. We must for this reason be all the more grateful that the writers of the letters that *have* survived took so much trouble to ensure that the matters raised in a previous letter from a royal brother or a member of his family were understood, considered and responded to point for point.

This was especially important in cases where the Akkadian language, in which international correspondence was almost always conducted, was not the native language of either sender or recipient. In such cases a particular communication exchange must have passed through no fewer than six stages from the initial composition of a letter to the receipt of a reply. Let us reconstruct these stages, with a hypothetical exchange originating from the Hittite court:

1. In consultation with the king, a scribe puts together a preliminary draft in the kingdom's official language, which we call Hittite and which the Hittites themselves called Nesite. The Hittite-language draft of Puduhepa's letter to Ramesses serves to illustrate this.
2. After corrections and revisions have been made to the draft, the king gives his approval to the final version, which is then translated into Akkadian.
3. The Akkadian version is conveyed to Egypt. It must then be translated into Egyptian so that it can be read to the pharaoh.
4. A response is prepared in Egyptian. Again, presumably, the Egyptian document passes through one or more preliminary drafts before the pharaoh gives it his nod.
5. It is then translated by an Egyptian scribe or scribes into Akkadian.
6. The response in Akkadian is conveyed to Hattusa, where it is translated into Hittite and then read to its recipient.

Amidst all these processes, the risks of overlooking, or misconstruing, an important point or question can have been far from negligible. Thus, in preparing a response the scribes needed to highlight in one way or another the most important parts of the letter received, especially those parts which required a direct response. These were then quoted word for word in the letter of reply, with an answer to each individual point or question given immediately after the quotation. When the return letter was received by the first correspondent, its responses could be checked against the statements made in the original letter. That would have helped greatly in eliminating or at least minimizing misunderstandings between the correspondents and possible causes for offence. Indeed letter-writers often found it necessary to defend themselves against what they regarded as unjust accusations from their partners in correspondence—accusations which apparently had arisen out of a misunderstanding or an oversight in the course of previous correspondence.

The messengers

Diplomatic missions

When ready for dispatch, the letters were enclosed in clay envelopes secured by the sender's seal and entrusted to messengers who conveyed them to their destination, on foot or by wagon, occasionally on horseback and sometimes by boat. The letters make frequent reference to messengers, though in this context the term 'messenger', '*mār šipri,* in Akkadian, has a wide variety of meanings, ranging from mere couriers or deliverymen to distinguished ambassadors, magnates and chief ministers, whose ranks sometimes included members of the king's own family, empowered to negotiate with a foreign ruler on their master's behalf.[10] The latter group served as regular intermediaries between the Great Kings, their role assuming all the greater importance since the kings themselves never met. 'Though we Great Kings are brothers,' wrote Queen Puduhepa to Ramesses, 'the one has never seen the other. It is our messengers who come and go between us.'[11] In fact, a letter sent by a king to his royal brother was generally accompanied by a number of officials from his court. Its delivery belonged within the context of a diplomatic mission.

When Great Kings were on amicable terms, delegations sent by one to the other were hospitably received in the host court, often with much pomp and ceremony (particularly if a rich array of gifts came with them), and the members of the delegation were entertained and quartered in a generally lavish manner, or at least in a manner appropriate to their place in the delegation's pecking order. The handing over of a letter to the host king from his royal brother must also have been the occasion for some ceremony. The letter's presentation was accompanied or preceded by an address to the king delivered by the chief envoy, a man chosen for his particular skills in the area of diplomacy, and perhaps on occasions a member of his king's own family. If needed, an interpreter was at hand to translate his words into his host's tongue.

Speaking on his sovereign's behalf, the envoy probably began his address with words of greeting similar to those which regularly prefaced letters from one royal brother to another:

> With me all is well. With you may all be well. With your household, your wives, your sons, your dignitaries, your horses, your chariots, your countries may all be very well. With me all is well. With my household, my wives, my sons, my dignitaries, my horses, my many troops, all is well, and in my countries all is very well.[12]

This highly formulaic way of expressing royal greetings varied little from one letter to another, and presumably from one ambassadorial address to another. But it was all part of standard diplomatic protocol, and no doubt a skilful speaker with a sense of occasion delivered the words with considerable rhetorical

panache. In any case it was a necessary formality, and once the introductory pleasantries had been dealt with, both sides could get down to business.

The role of the chief envoy

His Majesty's chief representative may have had a number of items on his agenda for discussion with his host.[13] But no doubt much of his brief had to do with the contents of the letter entrusted to his charge, and in the first instance he probably confined himself largely to a presentation of its salient points, or to matters arising directly from it. While he must have been allowed some latitude by his king in how he went about his task, there were obvious limitations on what he could say. He had to be sure that it was consistent with his overall brief—and with what the letter itself actually said. No doubt there were scribes present to take down his words as he spoke them, so that they could be checked against the letter's contents. Once handed over and its tamper-proof seal removed, the letter would have been translated into the local language (if not Akkadian) by the recipient's own scribes so that its contents could be carefully scrutinized. Initially, this provided the means of confirming statements, promises or requests which the foreign envoy had made in his address.

If the letter failed to do this, the matter needed to be followed up. Thus Tarhundaradu, a king of Arzawa, wrote to Amenhotep III expressing his concern about a discrepancy between an envoy's verbal report and the contents of a letter which he had received from the pharaoh:

> As for the words (the envoy) Kalbaya spoke to me (on behalf of the pharaoh): 'Let a blood-relationship be established between us', I do not trust what Kalbaya has reported on this matter, for the tablet contains no confirmation of it.[14]

Hattusili III suggested to the king of Ahhiyawa that the tensions which had arisen in their relations (see Chapter 12) was due to botched reporting by royal messengers. Particularly at the highest levels of diplomacy, a messenger's misrepresentation to a foreign king of what his own king had actually said, whether through malice or incompetence, could have the most serious consequences for the culprit: 'Let us then try this case,' wrote Hattusili:

> Send, my brother, one of your subjects; and I will put on trial here the man who brought that message to you, and that man shall be beheaded. And if your man has distorted the message, then he too shall be beheaded.[15]

Before reply was made to a letter, there must have been discussion with the sender's representatives about its contents. Elaboration may have been sought on some of the points it raised, negotiation and compromise on some of its demands. There were probably many occasions on which the leader of a diplomatic

mission had to use his initiative and discretion in resolving with his host and his advisers various issues arising out of the royal correspond ence. And he might well have needed all his diplomatic skills in dealing with the hostile reactions which some letters undoubtedly provoked. A lot of the correspondence is brimful of complaints and reproaches and on occasions unreasonable demands. Sometimes the response to these was measured and reassuring. Sometimes a king took great exception to what a royal brother, or sister, had written to him. That certainly was Suppiluliuma's first reaction to the blunt letter he received from Ankhesenamun, Tutankhamun's widow, who was angered and frustrated by his less than satisfactory response to a request she had made of him. She now repeated her request, but in terms which merely provoked in her correspondent an outburst of self-righteous indignation. It took the consummate skills of the queen's envoy Hani, who had accompanied the letter to Hattusa and was well known in international circles as a kind of diplomatic Mr Fixit, to calm him down and to persuade him, finally, to accede to the queen's request. As things turned out, it is a pity that he did. We shall have more to say about this below (Chapter 11).

There was often independent confirmation that an envoy was faithfully carrying out his brief. A foreign delegation to, say, the court of Egypt was frequently accompanied on its mission by the pharaoh's own officials, now returning home from a mission which they themselves had conducted to the court whence the delegation had originated. Thus Ramesses wrote to Puduhepa:

> Say to my sister: 'Now Tili-Teshub, my sister's messenger, has arrived before me, accompanied by Riamashsi, my sister's messenger,[16] Parihnawa, my messenger, and Zinapa and Mania, also my messengers. They have told me of the health of my sister, of the health of the Great King, the King of Hatti, my brother, and of the health of his sons. And I was overjoyed.[17]

In addition to his audiences with the foreign envoys, the king received separate reports from his own returning officials on the outcome of their mission, and above all on any meetings they had held with his royal brother. Their reports served to complement and hopefully confirm the messages brought by the latter's representatives. Independent reports by his officials also provided a king with a further check on the reliability of interpreters in cases where both oral and written communications from a foreign court had to be translated before they could be understood by the recipient.

Occasionally formalities might be dispensed with and procedures greatly abbreviated if a king wished to send an express message to a member of a foreign court. Ramesses sent his envoy Mania to Queen Puduhepa with an important verbal communication. Its apparent urgency was the reason for avoiding any delay caused by putting it into writing. But there was still need for some form of verification. To enable the queen to confirm that Mania's report

was a genuine and accurate record of his master's words, Ramesses briefed her own representative Riamashshi on the contents of his message and sent him back to Hattusa along with the Egyptian envoy. All this is explained in a dispatch which accompanied the pair.[18]

Foreign envoys in residence and detention

It may seem fortuitous that a representative of the Hittite queen happened to be present in the Egyptian court at the time. But, particularly during a period of regular diplomatic exchanges between royal houses, it was probably quite common for envoys to reside in a foreign court for an indefinite time in order to be on hand should they suddenly be required for particular diplomatic assignments. In any case, when Great Kings dispatched their own officials to accompany a foreign delegation on its journey home, with a mission of their own, they were thus ensuring a continuing cycle of communication between themselves and their royal brothers, so that at any given time we might expect envoys from the court of one king to be at least temporarily resident at the court of another. The inclusion of a host's officials in the diplomatic travelling entourage probably also gave an added sense of security to foreign delegations when passing through their host's subject territories, since presumably it helped establish their *bona fides* as members of genuine diplomatic missions, and afforded them some protection against harassment or obstruction by local bureaucracies, or even robbery by local officials.

The actual length of time that 'messengers', from couriers upwards, could expect to spend in their host's country varied considerably, depending on a number of factors. Seasonal conditions were one of these. Thus if a diplo matic mission was sent from Hatti to Egypt in late autumn (and we know of at least one that was), snowbound routes could have prevented its return until early the following spring. That may have been no great hardship when one compares wintering in the Land of the Nile with the prospect of spending the same season on the Anatolian plateau! We have suggested that a number of diplomatic personnel might have been installed for indefinite periods in foreign kingdoms —'envoys in residence'. But this falls well short of anything comparable with modern embassy establishments, even of the most rudimentary kind.[19]

Of course lengthy stays in foreign countries provided diplomats with opportunities for intelligence-gathering on a wide range of matters. That must have been a major item in the debriefing of an envoy on his return home. And undoubtedly when a king had as his guests foreign envoys whose commissions had previously taken them to the kingdoms of his royal brothers, he sought to extract from them all the information he could about these kingdoms. Of particular interest to him was information on the state of the relations between other Great Kings, a topic which features in one form or another in a number of the royal letters. Were the relations amicable? Was there any friction between

them? It was equally important for him to know if any of his peers was getting more favoured treatment from a royal brother than he himself was.

In these and other ways the Great Kings kept closely in touch with what was going on in the international diplomatic scene, and did not hesitate to highlight in their letters any grievances they had against their fellow kings, for real or imagined insults, for giving preferential treatment to another king, for the alleged paltriness of gifts, for failing to acknowledge a royal accession or a royal illness—and quite frequently for preventing their envoys from returning home.

There were many occasions when envoys were detained in a foreign country against their king's will. 'You have detained my messenger for two years!' Burnaburiash II complained to Akhenaten, demanding the man's immediate release.[20] His predecessor Kadashman-Enlil I accused Akhenaten's father Amenhotep III of detaining one of his envoys for six years.[21] On another occasion we hear of messengers from one of the pharaoh's Syrian subject states, Tunip, being detained in Egypt for no less than twenty years![22] There were a number of reasons, as we shall see, why foreign delegations might be prevented from leaving their hosts' lands. Whatever these reasons were, visiting envoys clearly required their host king's permission before they could leave his kingdom and return home. Letters to the pharaoh frequently contained the request that a messenger not be detained after his mission is completed. 'Don't delay the messenger I send on a visit to you,' wrote the Assyrian king Ashur-uballit to the king of Egypt. 'Let him make his visit and then head home. Let him see what you and your country are like and then head home.'[23] 'I herewith send Keliya, my chief minister, and Tunip-Ibri,' the Mitannian king Tushratta wrote to Amenhotep III. 'May my brother let them go promptly so that they can report back to me promptly.'[24]

In many instances, detention probably had no punitive or hostile intentions, at least none that were overt. There were always formalities to be completed before a delegation could take its leave, and some of these could involve interminable delays. Neither the envoys themselves nor the kings who sent them had much control over the length of their stay in a foreign kingdom if their host was not particularly co-operative or diligent in expediting their return. A prolonged stay might be due to a slow-moving bureaucracy, to the unavailability of His Majesty to grant the necessary discharge, or simply to royal whim. It might also be due to the time taken to prepare a response for the delegation to take back to their king, or to put together a consignment of gifts to accompany them—or to make all the necessary preparations for the dispatch of a royal bride.

The pharaoh Amenhotep III had sent Mane, one of his most senior diplomatic officials, to Mitanni in order to escort King Tushratta's daughter Taduhepa back to Egypt, where she would become the pharaoh's bride. Much time had now elapsed since Mane's departure, without any news either from or about him. Deeply concerned, Amenhotep wrote to Tushratta to find out what was going on. We have Tushratta's reply. He explained that Mane had been kept in Mitanni because of the time taken to prepare the princess for her journey to Egypt. He

assured the pharaoh that he need have no concern about his envoy's welfare: 'He is not ill, he is not dying, he is just the same,' Tushratta wrote. 'Indeed I have treated him and all my brother's troops who accompanied him with great honour and distinction!'[25] We do not know how long Mane had already been at the Mitannian court when Tushratta wrote his letter. But it was likely to be another six months, the pharaoh was advised, before his envoy and the bridal party he was escorting would be ready to depart.

Sometimes detention was quite clearly intended as a punitive measure. It could serve, for example, to punish an envoy for an offence he had committed in his host's country. We shall consider examples of this below (pp. 71–2). But more often than not, a detained envoy was the hapless, innocent victim of his host's displeasure at something his own king had done or had left undone. Even at the level of squabbles between local officials in different regions of the same kingdom, we hear of one official threatening to detain indefinitely any 'servants' of another official who came into the territory which he controlled (see Chapter 10). Sometimes envoys visiting a foreign court found themselves detained in reprisal for similar action taken by their own king. 'Earlier, I had said this to my brother/ wrote Tushratta in a strong protest to Akhenaten:

> 'I am going to detain my brother's messenger Mane, until my brother lets my messengers go and they come to me.' And now my brother has absolutely refused to let them go, and he has put them under very strict detention. [26]

Modern diplomatic practice generally works the other way. The usual practice today is for a country to expel resident foreign diplomats rather than detain visitingones when it wishes to express serious displeasure at acts committed by them or the country which they represent. As in the ancient world, such action almost invariably meets with a prompt response in kind.

Akhenaten had held in detention an envoy from the kingdom of Alasiya as a protest against his fellow countrymen's alleged participation in pirate raids upon the Egyptian coast. The pirates had been operating in the eastern Mediterranean and along its shores from bases on Anatolia's southern coast, within the territory called Lukka in Hittite texts. Akhenaten had written to the Alasiyan king accusing him and his subjects of complicity in the raids. The accusation was indignantly denied: 'Why, my brother, do you charge me with this? I have done nothing of the kind!' On the contrary, the writer declared, Alasiya too had been plagued by the pirates. 'These men from Lukka seize villages in my *own* country year after year!'[27] And he went on to assure the pharaoh that his own subjects would never have joined them.

In fact the pharaoh's allegations may not have been entirely without foundation, for some of the pirates taken prisoner apparently included persons of Alasiyan origin. But the Alasiyan king wanted to test the truth of this for himself. 'If men from my own country were amongst them,' he wrote, 'return

these men to me and I will do as I think appropriate.' Even so, he really could not believe that his own subjects had committed acts of piracy: 'You simply don't know the men of my country. They would never do such a thing!' But then in the very next sentence: 'If men from my country did do this, then *you* must act as you think appropriate.' The passage is full of inconsistencies. Each sentence appears to contradict its predecessor: My men could not possibly have behaved in this way. But if they did, return them to me and I'll deal with them. But they could not have done such a thing. But if they did, deal with them as you see fit.

Such inconsistencies suggests a document composed hastily and in the absence of the Alasiyan king's usual expert adviser on diplomatic communications. Perhaps he was the man being detained in Egypt! The pharaoh's refusal to let him go back home had forced his Alasiyan royal brother to act as his own messenger. That at least appears to be the gist of what the letter-writer is saying, but as Professor Moran comments, the writing in this passage is so inept that it could be interpreted in several different ways—in itself a clear enough indication that it was written without benefit of expert advice.

If a king stopped sending his messengers to a foreign kingdom, this too might be considered a hostile act, for it amounted in effect to the severing of diplomatic relations with that kingdom, or at least with its current king. Hattusili III became alarmed when Kadashman-Enlil II, who had recently ascended the throne of Babylon, suddenly terminated his diplomatic missions to the Hittite court. Hattusili wrote to him asking why. Kadashman-Enlil wrote back with various excuses: 'Since the Ahlamu are hostile I have stopped sending my messengers The King of Assyria prevents my messenger from crossing his territory.' These excuses were summarily dismissed: 'Is your kingdom so small that (even) the Ahlamu could cut off your messengers?' asked Hattusili contemptuously. 'Who is this king of Assyria that he could hold back your messengers while *my* messengers repeatedly cross his land (without hindrance)?' The real reason for Kadashman-Enlil's action lay elsewhere, so Hattusili believed. It was his evil adviser Itti-Marduk-balatu who was responsible, a man whom 'the gods have caused to live far too long, and in whose mouth unfavourable words never cease'. That at least was Hattusili's assessment of the king's powerful vizier, who represented an anti-Hittite, pro-Assyrian faction in the Babylonian court. 'Take heed,' he warned his young royal brother: 'Only when two kings are at enmity do their messengers cease regular travel between them.'[28]

Envoys harshly treated

III treatment of a king's envoys was a frequent cause for complaint, even in cases where relations between two Great Kings were otherwise amicable. Foreign dignitaries could not always count on being accorded the respect to which their status and their mission entitled them. They might be subjected to humiliating treatment in a foreign kingdom or simply ignored, perhaps because the host king had been offended by something their own king had done, perhaps

because he no longer considered their king to be his equal. That might explain Ramesses' alleged humiliation of the Babylonian envoys when they sought to visit the Babylonian princess in Egypt. From a passing reference in the draft of Puduhepa's letter to Ramesses (referred to above, pp. 61–2), we have the impression that the pharaoh had ceased to regard the ruler of Babylon as worthy of the title of Great King,[29] and if he considered him not to be so, then he could probably no longer be bothered with his envoys. Loss of status could lead to the severing of diplomatic contacts. Visiting representatives of lesser kings might find themselves denied any prospect of a meeting with a Great King, no matter how persistently they pressed their requests for an audience.

Sometimes envoys risked a harsher fate in their host's country. Thus Ashur-uballit lodged a strong objection with Akhenaten about the latter's treatment of the Assyrian messengers sent to his court. They had been made to stand for hours under the fierce Egyptian sun until their very lives were at risk: 'Why should envoys be forced to stand constantly out in the sun and so die from sun-stroke?' Ashur-uballit indignantly asked his royal brother.[30] Then he added:

> If standing out in the sun brings some benefit to the king, then let him (the messenger or the king himself?) stand out in it and let him die right there from sun-stroke, provided that there is some benefit for the king![31]

The sarcasm is obvious. But it does raise the question of whether the pharaoh really was guilty of deliberate and malicious ill treatment of his foreign guests. Not so, if we follow the line taken by Professor Redford: far from being singled out for punitive treatment, Ashur-uballit's representatives were simply participants—even if unwilling participants—in a protracted ceremony of sun worship in which the pharaoh himself, along with all his officials, took part.[32] The passage in question is open to other interpretations. If, however, Redford is right, we would have in this letter the only reference (and then a very indirect one) in the entire Amarna archive to the pharaoh's solar cult. But this was not likely to impress Ashur-uballit. Cultural sensitivity about his royal brother's religious beliefs and practices was undoubtedly of much less concern to him than the welfare and safety of his envoys.

On a later occasion Hattusili III took Ramesses to task for his treatment of one of the Hittite envoys in Egypt. 'I sent my messenger Zuwa to you on a diplomatic mission/ he declared, 'so that he might come into my brother's presence and speak my words to him. Why have you not released him?'[33] The pharaoh left his royal brother in no doubt about what he thought of his envoy. 'Who is this dog?' he snorted, stating that he had ordered the unfortunate Zuwa to be bound up hand and foot. We have no idea of what Zuwa had done to deserve such treatment, but he had clearly managed to get himself into serious trouble with the Egyptian authorities. So serious in fact that he apparently faced the death penalty, for Hattusili declared: 'It is not right to kill a messenger!' Ramesses remained unmoved. Though he assured his royal brother that the other

Hittite envoy who was there at the time (his name is lost but for the first letter, A), would be treated in accordance with his master's wishes, Zuwa's fate seems to have been sealed. His king's (and no doubt his own) worst fears may well have been realized. To judge from Ramesses' peremptory dismissal of Hattusili's appeal, diplomatic immunity counted for little in the Late Bronze Age world.

But perhaps not on all occasions. During Akhenaten's reign, two envoys from Mitanni, called Artashuba and Asali, who had broken the law during a visit to Egypt were allowed to return home, presumably on the condition that their own king take appropriate action against them. In a letter to the pharaoh, Tushratta indicated that justice had to a point been done. The guilty pair had been brought before him, put in chains, and exiled to a town on the frontier of Mitannian territory. Tushratta had, however, stopped short of imposing the death penalty, at least until such time as the pharaoh provided him with more information about the nature of their crime. [34]

Rewards and hazards of the diplomatic profession

Undoubtedly the diplomatic world had its fair share of rogues, as we shall see. But there were many honourable individuals in the ranks of diplomats, who were as much respected and trusted by foreign rulers as they were by their own kings. Indeed they played a crucial role in the relations between the Great Kings. Sometimes a king asked his royal brother for the services of a particular envoy. Thus Burnaburiash II requested that Akhenaten make available his magnate Haya to head the escort which was to convey the betrothed Babylonian princess to her new home in Egypt.[35] The Egyptian envoy Mane seems to have become a firm favourite of Tushratta during his prolonged stay in Mitanni to make preliminary arrangements for the marriage of Tushratta's daughter to the pharaoh. There's no-one like him in all the world,' Tushratta declared.[36] When Tushratta subsequently wrote to Amenhotep asking for an Egyptian envoy to accompany his own envoys on their return from Egypt, he left no doubt as to whom he wanted: 'May my brother send only Mane. My brother should know that if he sends not Mane but someone else, I do not want him! No! Send only Mane!'[37]

Envoys could also be the recipients of generous gifts from their host kings, in lavishness second only to those presented to their sovereign lords. Yet the rewards of their profession were well justified by the demands imposed upon them. Apart from the high level of political skills required of them, the lives they led in their masters' service often made great physical demands upon them, and sometimes subjected them to considerable danger. Travelling by foot or by wagon, they must often have passed through territory where there could be no guarantee of their personal safety, even when they were provided with a military escort (see the next page). Harsh environmental conditions, fierce heat and failure of water supplies were amongst the natural hazards they faced, as Burnaburiash noted in a letter to Akhenaten.[38] They faced threats too from wild

animals, as well as from their fellow creatures: The courier goes out to a foreign country, after he has made over his property to his children, being afraid of lions and Asiatics.'[39]

Local authorities, even in states which were subject to the king who had sent the envoys or to the king for whose court they were heading, could not always protect the travellers against attacks by bandits or rebels. The envoys could offset the dangers of such attacks by joining larger groups like merchant caravans, provided that these happened to be travelling at times and along routes which suited the diplomatic missions. Indeed merchants themselves sometimes acted as their overlord's representatives on such missions.[40] But even large caravans were not always proof against attacks by mountain groups like the Habiru.[41] And if we are to believe another of Burnaburiash's complaints to the pharaoh, the latter's own vassal rulers, like the mayor of Damascus, were not averse to attacking and robbing the caravans of Babylonian envoys.[42] Whether or not Akhenaten ever exacted the justice or paid the compensation which his Babylonian brother demanded for such attacks is unknown. One suspects that many crimes of this nature were committed and went unpunished—in itself an incentive to further crimes against foreign travellers, whether royal envoys or merchants.

Whether travelling independently or as part of merchant caravans, foreign delegations were generally provided with a military escort, both by their own king and sometimes as well by their host king for their homeward journey. The size of the escort was no doubt substantially increased when the delegation was accompanied by a large and valuable consignment of goods, and particularly if the travelling party included a distinguished personage like a royal bride being escorted to her new homeland as bride for its king.

The time taken by messengers in travelling from one court to another obviously depended on a number of factors. It has been estimated that on average the distance covered in a day ranged from about 27 to 37 kilo metres, or 17 to 23 miles.[43] From one of Tushratta's letters to Akhenaten, we learn that a period of three months was considered a commendably short time for a return journey between the Mitannian capital and Akhenaten's city in middle Egypt.[44] However, in the letter in question the messenger on the return journey brought back four sacks of gold and various items of jewellery as a gift from the pharaoh, and we may assume he came to Egypt with gifts of equivalent value from Mitanni. This would inevitably have slowed progress, given the security measures required to protect the consignment and the personnel accompanying it. In such cases, and depending on the size of the consignment, we would expect a round trip between the pharaoh's court and any of the courts of his royal brothers normally to take somewhere between four and six months.[45]

We have referred to the human as well as the natural hazards which the king's messengers frequently had to deal with in the course of their journeys. Rapacious local officials were sometimes not the least of these hazards. Even if they stopped short of confiscating an entire consignment of goods sent by one Great

King to another, they might demand payment of taxes on the goods. Foreign envoys were presumably spared such demands when they were accompanied on their journeys by representatives of the king to whom the local officials were subject. And on occasions an overlord received a request from a brother-king to ensure in advance that safe passage and exemption from taxes be granted to merchants passing through his territory.[46] Sometimes, too, foreign envoys were provided with a kind of passport by their king, like the travel document issued by Tushratta to his envoys to facilitate their passage to Egypt through the pharaoh's subject territories:

> A message to all the kings of Canaan, the subjects of my brother (the King of Egypt). Thus speaks the King (of Mitanni): 'I am sending herewith my messenger Akiya to the King of Egypt, my brother, on an urgent mission. No-one must detain him. Allow him safe entry into Egypt! There they should take him to an Egyptian border official. And no-one should for any reason lay hand on him.'[47]

We do not know how effective such documents were in protecting the envoys from harassment by local officials. In many cases it probably depended on how large a military escort was at hand to ensure that they were honoured.

Notes

1 They may have been used for a variety of purposes, including brief, informal letters whose contents could be erased when the recipient had read them and a reply sent back on the same tablet. They perhaps also served as notebooks for temporary records of administrative details. (On both possibilities, see Bryce 2002:69–70.) And they apparently were also used for recording royal grants (see Houwink ten Cate 1994:235). On the use of wooden tablets in general, see Symington (1991).
2 See Otten (1956).
3 For more detailed treatments of the scribal profession in Egypt, see Wente (1995); in Mesopotamia, see Pearce (1995); in Anatolia, see Bryce (2002: 56–71).
4 Babylonian is one of the two varieties in which the Akkadian language appears. The other is Assyrian. Of the 'provincial' features of the Babylonian used in the Amarna letters, see Moran (1992:xix–xx).
5 *EA* 11:16–17.
6 These letters have most recently been edited by Edel (1994), and will be discussed at some length in subsequent chapters.
7 The name of the Late Bronze Age kingdom on the island of Cyprus.
8 *EA* 39, 40.
9 *ÄHK* 105:216–23, trans. Beckman (1996:126–9). On the identities of the correspondents, see Beckman (1996:125–6).
10 On messengers and 'ambassadors' in general, see Oller (1995), Liverani (2001: 71–6).
11 *ÄHK* 53 15'-16': 138–9.

12 *EA* 1:1–9.
13 Kuhrt (1995:343) remarks that, while it was usual for several envoys to be sent to a foreign court, apparently only one of their number had an audience with the king at the receiving court.
14 *EA* 32:1–6.
15 *KUB* XIV 3 (*CTH* 181) (the so-called 'Tawagalawa Letter', to be discussed in Chapter 12) iv 46–50, after Gurney in Garstang and Gurney (1959:114).
16 Though a messenger of the Hittite queen, he was probably a native Egyptian; see most recently Singer (1988:331).
17 *ÄHK* 43 obv. 11–18:106–7, after Beckman (1996:130).
18 *ÄHK* 48:128–9.
19 Cohen (1996:257–8) argues in favour of the possibility of resident embassies; against this, see Berridge (2000:214–17).
20 *EA* 7:49–50.
21 *EA* 3:13–14.
22 *EA* 59:13–14. But as Moran in his commentary on this letter notes, the period of twenty years should be regarded as a round number rather than a precise figure, indicating a considerable passage of time.
23 *EA* 15:16–22. The addressee's identity is uncertain.
24 *EA* 17:46–9, trans. Moran.
25 *EA* 20:64–70 (condensed).
26 *EA* 28:16–22, trans. Moran.
27 *EA* 38:7–12.
28 Extracts from *KBo* I 10 and *KUB* III 72 (*CTH* 172), based on trans. by Beckman (1996:134).
29 The queen says: 'If you should say: "The King of Babylonia is not a Great King", then my brother does not know the rank of Babylonia' (trans. Beckman 1996:128).
30 *EA* 16:43–5. We are reminded of the experience suffered by the envoys sent from Babylon to Egypt during Ramesses II's reign, as reported to the Hittite queen Puduhepa by the Babylonian envoy Ellil-bel-nishe (referred to above, pp. 61–2).
31 *EA* 16:46–9. On the letter as a whole, see Artzi (1997).
32 Redford (1984:235). Cf. Westbrook (2000:34).
33 *ÄHK* 39:96–7.
34 *EA* 29:173–81.
35 *EA* 11:14–15.
36 *EA* 24: II 95–6.
37 *EA* 24: IV 54–7.
38 *EA* 7:53–4.
39 From a series of satirical texts from ancient Egypt, trans. J.A.Wilson in Pritchard (1969:433).
40 See Liverani (2000:22).
41 On the Habiru, see Chapter 9.
42 *EA* 7:73–7. The mayor of Damascus seems to have been notorious for this kind of activity.
43 See Oller (1995:1,467).
44 *EA* 29:26.

45 For the time-scales involved, see Liverani (2000:21–2).
46 E.g. *EA* 39 and 40.
47 *EA* 30, after Oppenheim (1967: no. 77:134).

4
THE CLUB OF ROYAL BROTHERS

Brotherly love

Communications between the Great Kings were characterized by effusive expressions of the love of one royal brother for another, by declarations of heartfelt concern for the health and well-being of a royal brother's entire establishment, beginning with his family and extending to his magnates, his horses, his chariots and indeed to all the lands over which he held sway. By the Amarna period 'love' had become a regular part of the terminology of international diplomacy[1]

The Akkadian term for it, *râmulra'āmu* (and derivative forms), combining affection, devotion and esteem, occurs with particular frequency in the correspondence exchanged between Egypt and Mitanni. During the final stages of Amenhotep III's reign, Egypt's alliance with Mitanni had been consolidated by the pharaoh's marriage to the Mitannian princess Taduhepa, daughter of Tushratta.[2] But the marriage-baked meats might well have coldly furnished forth the funeral table. Amenhotep probably died not long after the wedding, and his chief wife Tiye was anxious that the bonds which her husband had established with Mitanni should remain intact in the reign of her son Akhenaten. A new king meant that a new pact had to be concluded with Tushratta, and Tiye wanted to be sure that there was no interruption in the diplomatic relations between the two countries.

Summoning the Mitannian ambassador Keliya, she delivered to him her own personal message to take back to his master. In this message she reminded Tushratta of the bonds of affection which had united her husband with Tushratta's father Shuttarna (II)—bonds which had been maintained with Tushratta himself after his father's death. That was reflected in the embassies which Amenhotep had kept sending to Mitanni. She called upon Tushratta to follow this example: 'Do not forget your love for Mimmureya (Amenhotep)', she urged him, 'but have even greater love for Naphurreya (Akhenaten)[3] Keep on sending embassies of joy, one after the other. Do not cut them off.' Tushratta was quick to reassure her. 'I will never forget my love for your husband', he

declared. ‘And as for Naphurreya, your son, my love for him will be ten times greater!’[4]

To the new pharaoh, Tushratta wrote in similar vein: ‘My brother said this:

> Just as you always showed love to my father Mimmureya, so now show love to me.’Since my brother is desirous of my love, shall I not be desirous of my brother’s love? At this very moment I show you ten times more love than I did to your father![5]

Given Tushratta’s looming confrontation with the Hittites, it is hardly surprising that he should respond with such alacrity to the overtures of Akhenaten and his mother. A renewal and strengthening of his alliance with Egypt might well have a number of strategic benefits before the contest between Mitanni and Hatti had run its course.

Consistent with expressions of brotherly love and concern for a fellow king, the ethics of diplomacy required a decent show of grief upon his death. ‘When I heard news of my brother Nimmureya’s[6] death,’ Tushratta wrote to Akhenaten,

> on that day I wept and consumed neither food nor water. In my grief I said: ‘Let me die, or let 10,000 in my own country die, and let 10,000 in my brother’s country die as well—if only my brother, whom I love and who loves me, could live as long as heaven and earth.’[7]

Extravagant as such protestations of grief obviously were, they may not have been entirely devoid of genuine regret at the passing of a royal brother—if only for reasons of self-interest. As Hattusili III discovered when Kadashman-Turgu died, an ally’s successor could not always be relied upon to follow in the footsteps of the man he replaced. Kadashman-Turgu’s son Kadashman-Enlil showed himself distinctly less amenable than his father to friendship and co-operation with Hattusili, at least in the early stages of his reign. Hence the frequently expressed desire in correspondence with a new king that relations built up during a previous regime be maintained and even bettered. ‘When your father and I established friendly relations and became affectionate brothers, we did not become brothers for a single day, ‘Hattusili wrote to Kasdashman-Enlil. ‘Did we not establish brotherhood and friendly relations in perpetuity? We then set down an agreement with each other as follows: “We are mortal. The survivor shall protect the children of the one who goes first to his fate.”’[8]

Continuity was the key to stability. Grief at the passing of an old king had to be tempered with joy at the accession of a new, and a declaration of confidence that all would be in the future as it had been in the past. After duly expressing his grief at the death of Amenhotep, Tushratta went on to say:

> When I heard that his eldest son Naphurreya[9] is now king in his place, then I spoke thus: ‘My brother Nimmureya is not dead. His eldest son

> Naphurreya is now king in place of him. Nothing at all will be changed from what it was before!'[10]

This last statement was the significant one: 'Nothing at all will be changed from what it was before!' But a fellow king required constant reassurance of this. Hence the frequent complaints that gifts sent to a royal brother were inferior in quantity or quality to those sent by the giver's predecessor, either to the recipient himself or to *his* predecessor. As we have already noted, the sincerity and extent of a brother's love were unashamedly assessed in materialistic terms. Gifts provided the easiest and most tangible way of measuring this love. We shall see a number of examples of this in the next chapter.

A matter of geography

There were other ways too of assessing a brother's love, or apparent lack of it. Like an anxious spouse in an insecure marriage partnership, a king could be highly sensitive to real or imagined slights from his royal brother. Thus, Burnaburiash complained that when he had fallen ill Akhenaten had shown not the slightest concern:

> Ever since my brother's messenger came here, I have been unwell. Ask your messenger and he will confirm that. And I am still by no means recovered. Has my brother not heard of my illness? Why has he shown me no concern? Why has he sent no messenger to visit me?

Akhenaten's envoy sought to reassure Burnaburiash that no slight was intended: 'Of course your brother would have sent a messenger to you (to enquire after your health), if he had heard that you were ill,' he declared. But he pointed out that Egypt was a long way off: 'Who is there who could immediately tell your brother of your illness so that he could send to you his good wishes?' Burnaburiash seemed surprised by this: 'For my brother, a Great King, is there really a country that is far distant and one that is close by?' The Egyptian messenger suggested to him that he confirm with his own messenger that this was in fact the case. And that is what Burnaburiash did: 'When I consulted my own messenger and he confirmed that Egypt was a long way off, I was no longer angry.'[11]

Burnaburiash's apparent ignorance of the geography of the region is very hard to accept at face value. Admittedly, after the demise of Hammurabi's dynasty the rulers of Babylon seldom travelled beyond the frontiers of their southern Mesopotamian kingdom, at least not before the campaigns which later members of the Kassite dynasty conducted in Assyrian territory, and none may ever have travelled west of the Euphrates. Hence, unlike a number of their brother-kings who had campaigned far from their homelands, they had little or no first-hand experience of just how vast the Near Eastern region was, especially with Egypt

added in. Nevertheless, through their regular diplomatic exchanges with foreign courts they must have been well aware of the very large distances between the royal capitals—some 2,000 kilometres, for example, between Babylon and Akhetaten. Even for a messenger travelling post-haste, a round trip between the pharaoh's court and any of the courts of his royal brothers would have taken two to three months. Fully fledged diplomatic missions would have taken much longer, particularly if accompanied by consignments of gifts. Burnaburiash knew perfectly well how far his representatives had to travel to reach the pharaoh's court and how long the journey took. And he knew perfectly well that the pharaoh would not for one minute have accepted his claim of ignorance.

How, then, do we explain this extraordinary claim? According to Professor Jönsson, there was a tactical purpose behind the pretence of ignorance, which becomes clear later in the letter. Burnaburiash was sending the pharaoh a hidden message. He was displeased with him—offended by something he had done or failed to do—and expressed this symbolically by sending him a less impressive consignment of gifts than might otherwise have been expected. But in so doing he did not want to give the impression of stinginess or poverty. Hence he used the excuse of the distance of the journey and bad travelling conditions (from information apparently supplied by an Egyptian messenger and subsequently verified by his own messenger) to justify his decision not to send finer gifts at this time.[12] If we follow Jönsson's line, we must assume that Burnaburiash had a particular reason for not stating the real grounds for his displeasure with the pharaoh. Instead, he used a pretext which he knew the pharaoh would readily see through, and further emphasized his discontent by the gifts he dispatched—making sure that their inferior quality could not be attributed to lack of generosity on his part or an inability to send something better. All this would presumably have been evident to the pharaoh, who was doubtless aware of the real reason for his royal brother's unhappiness with him.

But the explanation for Burnaburiash's feigned ignorance of geography may be rather more straightforward. Bonds of brotherly love required that a king should regularly ask after his royal brother's health and well-being, and send expressions of sympathy and concern if he heard that he was ill. However, amongst the 'get well cards' (Jönsson's term) Burnaburiash probably received from other quarters, there was a conspicuous absence of any message from the pharaoh. Almost certainly, Akhenaten had not received the news in time for him to send such a message, and Burnaburiash knew this. But it would have been quite inappropriate for Burnaburiash himself to make this excuse on the pharaoh's behalf. That would have been seen purely as a way of saving face. As far as others were concerned, the pharaoh had snubbed his royal brother—and they would continue to believe this unless there was an unequivocal disclaimer from the pharaoh himself, or at least from his emissaries. Burnaburiash had to play the diplomatic game. He had to show anger at the alleged snub, and to be seen to be making an appropriate response by lodging a protest with the

pharaoh's envoys, designed to elicit from them an explanation, and in effect an apology, for their master's apparent indifference to his illness.

They did what was expected of them. They assured Burnaburiash that the lack of any message of concern from their master was due not to his indifference but to the distance separating the two kingdoms, which prevented His Majesty from hearing about his brother's illness in time to write an appropriate letter. Burnaburiash thus received from them the statement he sought. Primarily for the benefit of others, he asked his own envoys to substantiate the claim about the great distance between Babylon and Egypt. The question he himself asked of the Egyptian envoy, apparently betraying an abysmal ignorance of the geography of the region, was nothing more than a rhetorical device designed to reinforce even further the point that the pharaoh's envoys had already made—the impossibility of the pharaoh hearing about his royal brother's illness in time to send him a message of sympathy. It was very much in Burnaburiash's own interests that the envoy's response to his protest be seen by all as entirely valid, and most importantly as dispelling any notion that the pharaoh's regard for his royal brother was in any way diminished.

There is another possible explanation for Burnaburiash's feigned ignorance. No doubt foreign envoys to Egypt were subjected to a constant stream of pharaonic propaganda about the size and might of Egypt's empire: it was the greatest empire that had ever been; there was no part of the world that lay beyond its Great King's reach; nothing happened in this world that he did not immediately know about; for such a ruler distance was of no consequence. This may well have been the line constantly fed to foreign envoys on their visits to Egypt. Yet the Egyptian envoy was now pleading distance as the excuse for his master's failure to hear about and acknowledge his royal brother's illness. Burnaburiash immediately seized upon the excuse. Perhaps *this* was the point of his question: 'So for my brother, a Great King, there really *is* a country that is far distant and one that is close by?' But the point was evidently lost on the Egyptian envoy, who took his host's question at face value. Burnaburiash then followed the envoy's advice and confirmed what he said with his own envoys. It was all part of the game he was playing. But the point of his question would have been clear to the pharaoh. Great Kings were not averse to taking their brothers down a peg or two when the opportunity offered itself. We shall see more examples of this.

The right to use the term 'brother'

The terminology of family relationships played a prominent role in the diplomatic exchanges between royal courts. The family concept which represented two Great Kings as brothers was applied also to other high-ranking members of their respective households. Ramesses II's son prince Sutahapsap addressed King Hattusili in correspondence as 'my father'; Ramesses himself addressed the Hittite prince Tashmi-Sharrumma as 'my son'. In the exchanges of letters between Ramesses and Hattusili's consort Puduhepa, pharaoh and Hittite

queen addressed each other as ‘my sister’ and ‘my brother’, respectively. So too Ramesses’ queen Nefertari (Naptera) addressed Puduhepa as ‘my sister’. Marriage links added a further dimension to the relationships between royal houses. Thus the Mitannian king Tushratta called Akhenaten both ‘my brother’ and ‘my son-in-law’—which incidentally provides a clear indication that his daughter Taduhepa had been transferred to Akhenaten’s matrimonial establishment after the death of Amenhotep III.

But the right to address a Great King as a brother, or members of his family as sisters, sons or daughters, could not be taken for granted. It had to be earned. That might mean demonstrating, first of all, that one had achieved the status of Great King. For brotherhood generally implied equality of status. Thus as Assyria began moving into the power vacuum east of the Euphrates left by the collapse of Mitanni, its king, Ashur-uballit, sought to establish himself as one of the big players in the international scene. With Egypt he took the diplomatic initiative of writing to the pharaoh Akhenaten and sending him gifts:

> Thus speaks Ashur-uballit, the king of Assyria to the king of Egypt:… Though hitherto none of my predecessors have written, I am writing to you today. And I am sending to you my messenger, to visit both you and your country. I am also sending you, as a gift, a beautiful chariot, two horses, and one date-stone of genuine lapis lazuli.[13]

The letter’s tone, content and modest terminology seem to indicate a first tentative approach by Ashur-uballit to the pharaoh, as a prelude to the possible establishment of diplomatic links with him. As Dr Kuhrt comments, his gifts were unsolicited and he made none of the usual requests for gifts in return.[14] He did, however, make one request of the pharaoh. The messenger whom he sent to Egypt should not be detained there: ‘Let him make his visit and then head home. Let him see what you and your country are like, and then head home.’

No doubt Ashur-uballit was well aware that even a Great King’s envoys could be subjected to interminable delays before being granted an audience with a fellow Great King. Or they could be detained for lengthy periods after an audience had been granted before being allowed to return home. With this in mind the Assyrian urged Akhenaten to deal promptly with his representative. The main purpose of the mission was to find out whether the pharaoh would entertain diplomatic relations with him, and he was anxious for his envoy to report back as soon as possible on how he had been received in the Egyptian court. In this first probing letter, Ashur-uballit had kept his approach deliberately low key. He neither called himself a Great King nor presumed to address Akhenaten as his brother. Nor did he ask for gifts in return for those he himself had sent.

But he must have received a positive response, for in a letter dispatched some years later to one of Akhenaten’s successors, either Tutankhamun or Ay, he wrote as one Great King to another, as one royal brother to another.[15] And, true to the nature of many such communications, he complained about the paltriness

of the pharaoh's gift to him: 'Gold in your country is dust; one simply gathers it up. Why are you so sparing of it? I am engaged in building a new palace. Send me as much gold as is needed to adorn it.'[16] He also called upon precedent, reminding the pharaoh of the gifts his father had sent to the king of Hanigalbat and stressing that he was now the equal of this king.[17] Professor Artzi comments that the pharaoh's reception of an Assyrian delegation marked a momentous turning point in Egyptian foreign policy; by an act equivalent to the opening of diplomatic relations, Assyria was now recognized as having a status equal to that of Egypt.[18]

Needless to say, the Babylonian Burnaburiash had been viewing Assyria's diplomatic initiatives with considerable alarm. In response to news he received about continuing Assyrian contacts with Egypt, he had written indignantly to the pharaoh of the time, probably Tutankhamun:

> The Assyrians are my subjects and it was not I who sent them to you! Why have they taken it upon themselves to come to your country? If you love me, let them conduct no business there, but send them back to me empty-handed![19]

Burnaburiash was blatantly stretching the truth—well beyond breaking point—in claiming that the Assyrians were his subjects. But we can readily understand his increasing concerns about his northern neighbour, now rapidly assuming the status of a major power in the region once ruled by Mitanni. It was but a matter of time before Assyria would become a serious threat to Babylon, particularly if its overlord achieved recognition on the international stage as a Great King.

But the mere fact of achieving the status of Great King did not automatically carry with it the right to address one's peers as 'brother'. Nor did securing the right to address one Great King as brother automatically confer upon the beneficiary the right to address *all* Great Kings in this way. Urhi- Teshub made this abundantly clear, during his relatively brief occupation of the Hittite throne, to the Assyrian king Adad-nirari I. The latter had made Assyria the greatest power east of the Euphrates by completing the conquest of Hanigalbat[20] and absorbing it within his own growing empire. Hanigalbat's links with Hatti were now totally severed, and Assyrian territory was thus extended to the borders of the Hittite viceregal kingdom of Carchemish. Adad-nirari sought to assure Urhi-Teshub of his desire for peace with Hatti. But in his eagerness to do so he made the mistake of calling the Hittite king 'my brother'. For this he received a strong rebuke:

> Why do you still continue to speak about brotherhood?' Urhi-Teshub protested. 'For what reason should I write to you about brotherhood?…Do those who are not on good terms customarily write to one another about brotherhood? On what account should I write to you about brotherhood? Were you and I born from one mother? As my grandfather and my father

> did not write to the King of Assyria about brotherhood, you shall not keep writing to me about brotherhood and Great Kingship. It is not my wish![21]

Urhi-Teshub grudgingly accepted that the Assyrian's military achievements justified his claim to the title of Great King. But this in itself did not give him the right to address the Great King of Hatti as his brother. 'Brotherhood' implied the existence of close personal links between two royal houses, frequently strengthened by marriage ties, and reflected in the exchanges of envoys and gifts and a commitment to friendship and co-operation.[22] Urhi-Teshub had suffered the humiliation of losing to Assyria the last remnants of Hittite authority over former Mitannian territory east of the Euphrates. But Adad-nirari was being outrageously presumptuous in thinking that his military successes gave him the right to an instant 'brotherhood' relationship with the king at whose expense these successes had been won. The Assyrian monarch apparently persisted in his attempts to establish closer ties with Hatti during Urhi-Teshub's reign, but with little or no success to judge from a comment later made by Urhi-Teshub's uncle Hattusili in a letter he wrote to Adad-nirari. In this letter he referred to the hostile treatment apparently suffered by Adad-nirari's envoys in Urhi-Teshub's court: The ambassadors whom you regularly sent here in the time of King Urhi-Teshub often experienced…aggravation.'[23]

Hattusili himself, on the other hand, had no hesitation in acknowledging Adad-nirari as his royal peer. Of course he was anxious to curry favour with all foreign kings, particularly in view of his own highly questionable assumption of power, in order to win recognition from them as Hatti's legitimate ruler. We might have expected the Assyrian king above all to welcome his accession, with the opportunities this offered for closer relations with Hatti after his predecessor's overt hostility towards Assyria. But Adad-nirari seems to have been reluctant to acknowledge the new occupant of the Hittite throne. Assyrian representatives were conspicuously absent from Hattusili's coronation celebrations, and Adad-nirari had failed to send the new king any of the tokens that signified diplomatic recognition of his status. Hattusili wrote to him in some concern: 'When I assumed kingship,' he said, 'you did not send an ambassador to me. It is the custom that when kings assume kingship, the kings, his equals in rank, send him appropriate greeting-gifts, clothing fit for kingship, and fine oil for his anointing. But you did not do this today.'[24] Indeed Assyria seems to have been the slowest of all the major kingdoms to recognize the new regime in Hattusa. We are reminded of the snub to Hattusili attributed by Ramesses to an (unidentified) Assyrian king: 'You're only a substitute for a Great King!'[25]

Clearly, use of the term 'Great King' as a title and 'my brother' as a form of address to another Great King was highly privileged, and those entitled to this privilege were quick to take exception to its use by those who were not. Hence Urhi-Teshub's objection to being called 'my brother' by the Assyrian upstart Adad-nirari and Ramesses' apparent criticism of the Hittite court for continuing to recognize Babylon's ruler as a Great King. Failure of a monarch to attain or

maintain the status of Great Kingship and royal brotherhood meant exclusion from the material and political benefits that came with diplomatic parity, including strategic marriage and political alliances, co-operation in maintaining order in frontier subject territories and access through gift-exchange to the resources of a royal brother's lands. Moreover, international recognition of the occupant of a throne as a Great King whom other Great Kings addressed as 'brother' could enhance, and sometimes help legitimate, the occupant's status amongst his own subjects.

Occasionally a lesser king might address a member of the elite club as 'brother' apparently without giving offence. Thus the ruler of Alasiya, whose kingdom lay on the island of Cyprus, regularly called Akhenaten 'my brother' in the letters he wrote to him.[26] Alasiya seems to have enjoyed particularly close relations with Egypt during the Amarna period, when trade links flourished between the two kingdoms. Of special importance amongst the items traded under the guise of gift-exchange was Alasiyan copper sent to Egypt[27] in exchange for 'silver'.[28] Of course Alasiya had commercial links with other Near Eastern kingdoms as well, but with none of these were its relations as close as with Egypt. There may have been special circumstances, including perhaps blood links between the royal houses of Alasiya and Egypt, which entitled the Alasiyan king to use in his correspondence with the pharaoh a form of address which was otherwise strictly confined to peers. With no other Great King did he enjoy the links of diplomatic brotherhood, or the status and privileges that this conferred. In a quite different context we shall later be considering a famous letter which Hattusili III wrote to the king of Ahhiyawa, a Mycenaean Greek kingdom, addressing him as 'my brother' and calling him a Great King (Chapter 12). But as far as we know he did this only once, and probably then only as a matter of *ad-hoc* political expediency. Neither the king of Alasiya nor the king of Ahhiyawa could ever have seriously been considered members of that small and highly elite group of men who shared dominance over the Near Eastern world.

Did the Great Kings ever meet?

On a purely personal level, what did each member of this group really think of his peers? It goes almost without saying that effusive expressions of love and devotion often amounted to little more than a diplomatic veneer which sometimes barely concealed mutually held feelings of hostility, suspicion and distrust. As we have remarked, the Great Kings were quick to take offence at real or imagined slights or insults from a royal brother, they had no hesitation in punishing or detaining their brother's envoys to express their displeasure at something he had done or had failed to do, and their esteem and love for each other were measured very largely by the quality and quantity of the gifts they sent and received. This is hardly surprising in the world of international relations in the Late Bronze Age, when bonds between Great Kings were established primarily for reasons of self-interest and political expediency. (The same could

of course be said about international alliances in almost any period of history.) The partnerships between them were never underpinned by any broader vision of a world united in peace and harmony, or by any desire to bring lasting stability and prosperity to the disparate array of peoples, countries and communities subject to their overlordship—except insofar as it served their own individual interests. There was never an occasion when the Great Kings met together in council, never an occasion when they conferred jointly on issues which affected them all. Each dealt with the others on a one-to-one basis through deputies. And each was kept well informed, through his own or foreign envoys, of one royal brother's dealings with another, down to precise information about the treatment accorded to his representatives and the gifts which he sent and received.

Undoubtedly, too, envoys on their return from a foreign court did not merely report on the official outcomes of their mission. They must also have provided their king with a range of other information of a more informal nature, including first-hand impressions of the personal qualities, foibles and idiosyncrasies of his royal brother. Such impressions could well have helped determine what strategies and approaches were likely to be most effective in future dealings with him, what gifts were most likely to please him, what his susceptibilities were and how these could be exploited. And no doubt purely out of curiosity a Great King was interested to know what his royal brother was like as a person, what he actually looked like. For on no occasion that we know of did any of the kings actually come face to face with even one royal brother, let alone all of them. This is something of a surprise, perhaps, given the emphasis which they placed on the close personal bonds between them, even if we allow that their declared love and affection for each other were a cultivated diplomatic fiction. But that aside, much could surely have been achieved by an occasional meeting between two Great Kings, especially when we consider that a set of negotiations conducted by representatives on their behalf sometimes extended over several years, with much of this time spent to-ing and fro-ing between the royal courts. Were attempts ever made to shortcut the process by arranging face-to-face meetings between Their Majesties themselves?

While we know of no attempts to arrange anything resembling a formal summit meeting, there are at least two instances on record where the possibility is raised of a Great King paying a ceremonial visit to the court of his royal brother. In a letter to Amenhotep III, the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil I complained that the pharaoh had failed to invite him to attend the celebration of an important festival in Egypt: 'When you celebrated a great festival, you did not send your messenger to me saying: "Come, to eat and drink!"'[29] To highlight the pharaoh's apparent discourtesy in not sending him an invitation, Kadashman-Enlil issued one of his own, requesting the pleasure of the pharaoh's company at the inauguration of a new palace in Babylonia. 'Now I am going to have a grand opening for the palace. Come yourself to eat and drink with me. I shall not do as you did!'[30]

We should take Kadashman-Enlil's complaint with the proverbial pinch of salt. There is little likelihood that he would ever have accepted an invitation to visit Egypt had one been forthcoming, even if (*allegedly* like his successor Burnaburiash) he thought Egypt was much closer to Babylonia than it really was. Nor could he have seriously expected the pharaoh to accept his own invitation. There were good reasons (to which we shall return) why a Great King would have been extremely reluctant to come in person as a guest to the kingdom of one of his royal peers. When important celebrations were held in a fellow king's land it might well have been customary for invitations to be sent to other Great Kings to participate in the celebrations, but only as a matter of form without any expectation that the invitations would be taken up, at least not by the actual invitees. No doubt they had the opportunity of sending high-ranking emissaries to represent them, as on the occasion of the 'Great Durbar' (to use Professor Redford's term) which Akhenaten held in his twelfth year. Representatives from at least the Hittite Great King were present on this occasion, along with envoys from Nubia, Libya and other states. Thus in making his complaint to Amenhotep, Kadashman-Enlil's concern was not so much about a lost opportunity to visit the land of the Nile. It was more about his royal brother's breach of protocol in not inviting him—particularly if other Great Kings had received invitations.

On the other hand, an invitation issued by Ramesses II to Hattusili III to visit Egypt was quite literally and seriously intended. The occasion he chose was one which might well have warranted a joint celebration by the royal brothers. The famous treaty had recently been concluded between them and they had sent to each other their respective versions of the pact on tablets of silver. This was surely an event to be marked in a special way. Hence Ramesses' invitation. We do not have a response from Hattusili himself to the invitation, but to judge from a subsequent letter from Ramesses he appears, initially at least, to have accepted it. Ramesses wrote thus to Hattusili, quoting a passage allegedly from a letter he had received from his Hittite brother:

> My brother has written to me as follows: 'The King, your brother, will come to you, and the King, your brother, will carry out the good proposal to visit you, and your brother will come to your side into your land in order to appear in the presence of his brother.'[31]

In fact Hattusili's acceptance of the invitation was probably rather more qualified and rather less enthusiastic than this quotation suggests, with the pharaoh putting a more positive spin on his response than was warranted. In reply Ramesses repeated the invitation, expressing his earnest hope and desire that it would be taken up:

> The Sun God and the Storm God, and my gods and the gods of my brother will bring it to pass that my brother sees his brother; and may my brother

> come to me and may he carry out the good proposal to visit me, and may one come to the other and may one appear before the presence of the other in the place where His Majesty occupies his throne.

As a further inducement to Hattusili, and perhaps in response to misgivings which the latter had expressed, Ramesses offered to meet his royal brother part-way through his journey:

> And I the Great King, the King of Egypt will go to the land of Kinahhi [i.e. Canaan, where Ramesses probably had a royal residence] in order to see the Great King, the King of the Land of Hatti, my brother, and appear before the presence of my brother, and to receive him into my land.

Preparations for the visit apparently progressed to the stage where Ramesses sent his dignitaries to meet Hattusili in the land of Upi.[32] This was the region around Damascus. It bordered on Hittite-controlled territory, but belonged at that time to Egypt. Doubtless the Egyptian reception committee had been instructed to escort Hattusili to his appointed meeting- place with Ramesses in Canaan, whence the pharaoh himself would escort him to his new capital Pi-Ramesse in the Egyptian Delta. Interestingly, it was in this context that Ramesses reminded Hattusili of the Assyrian king's scornful dismissal of him as a mere substitute for a Great King. This gratuitously humiliating reminder seems quite out of place here. But Ramesses may well have intended it as a further inducement for the reluctant invitee to come to Egypt. As we have noted, Hattusili was most eager for peer acceptance of his right to sit upon the throne of Hatti—and the Assyrian king had bluntly denied him that. A visit to Egypt at the pharaoh's invitation and as his guest would provide the strongest possible foreign endorsement for the legitimacy of Hattusili's position—effectively offsetting the snub from Assyria.

This, however, is the last we hear of the proposed visit. Almost certainly it never took place. One of Hattusili's illnesses may have flared up again, causing him to postpone if not cancel the trip. We know that he suffered from a recurrent medical condition which caused severe foot inflammation—'fire of the feet', as it is called in a prayer of his wife Puduhepa. Word of this particular indisposition had reached the pharaoh, perhaps in the context of an excuse from Hattusili for not taking up his invitation.[33] Ramesses sent him some salves or ointments to try to cure it (see Chapter 7). But apart from Hattusili's state of health, pressing problems within his subject territories, especially in the west, may well have led him to have second thoughts about a journey to the land of the Nile. Such an excursion would almost certainly have kept him away from his own kingdom for three months or more, an absence he could ill afford, especially if he had major concerns about possible uprisings amongst his subject peoples and their neighbours.

But let us suppose for just a moment that Hattusili actually did make the journey to Egypt. The physical contrast between the two Great Kings would have

been striking. By the time the treaty had been concluded Hattusili was a man in his late fifties or early sixties, and very likely looking a good deal older as his constitution was progressively enfeebled by repeated bouts of illness. Ramesses was some ten years younger, and still an impressive figure. With his fine head of auburn hair and distinguished aquiline profile, he was a remarkably handsome man. At a height of 1.7 metres he towered over most of his contemporaries, and probably would have done so over his royal brother had the two come together. The Hittite king's physical presence alone would undoubtedly have enhanced the pharaoh's status, not merely in the eyes of his own subjects, but also in the eyes of the representatives from other courts invited to participate in the celebrations associated with a royal visit from Hatti. Puduhepa, if not her husband, must have been acutely aware of these considerations, and very likely used her considerable influence with him to persuade him to cancel his trip. But in any case it is most improbable that Hattusili ever seriously contemplated accepting his royal brother's invitation. More likely, in proceeding with arrangements for a visit Ramesses had presumed too much from what was probably a polite but noncommittal response to his initial invitation.

There must also have been another consideration which ultimately ruled out any prospect of Hattusili going to Egypt. How would Ramesses have portrayed the visit, to his own subjects as well as to his foreign peers? Let us stress that it was *not* the practice for a Great King to visit the court of a fellow Great King. That was what subject kings and tributees did. That was why Great Kings conducted negotiations with their peers through diplomatic missions. And we shall see that some years later Ramesses did not hesitate to represent the arrival of his Hittite bride in Egypt as an act of homage paid to him by the king of Hatti (see Chapter 6). For the Hittite king himself to come to the Egyptian court would have been for Ramesses the ultimate propaganda coup.

Don't mention the war!

In spite of both Hattusili's and Ramesses' willingness to establish diplomatic communications and negotiate a peace treaty, tensions between them persisted. The Urhi-Teshub affair was certainly one of the major reasons for this. The failure to lay the ghosts of Kadesh completely to rest was another. It was difficult for visitors to Egypt from the Hittite court not to be reminded of the conflict, or rather Ramesses' version of it, since it was emblazoned in both word and picture on the walls of five of the most prominent Egyptian temples. And no doubt Ramesses saw to it that his foreign guests were made fully aware of this, probably by being taken on specially arranged tours of inspection. What particularly rankled with Hattusili was his royal brother's claim to have won the battle—virtually single-handed—and his portrayal of the abject submission of his opponents. Ramesses persisted in maintaining that he had triumphed over the Hittite Great King, the 'fallen one of Hatti' as he called him. Hattusili knew the truth of the matter. He was the brother of Ramesses' opponent-in-chief

Muwatalli, he had himself been an important participant in the battle, and he had subsequently participated in the pursuit of the Egyptian forces south to the region of Damascus. This former Egyptian territory had fallen to the Hittites and been placed for a time under the control of Hattusili himself. Yet Ramesses stubbornly maintained that *he* had been the victor!

There was clearly no way agreement would ever be reached between the royal brothers as to the truth of what actually happened at Kadesh, and the raising of the matter did nothing but exacerbate existing tensions. Hattusili had written a hostile letter to Ramesses complaining about his alleged refusal to give up Urhi-Teshub, the ex-king of Hatti, who had apparently found asylum in Egypt (see Chapter 13). Ramesses objected to Hattusili's belligerent tone: 'When you heard this matter, you wrote to your brother these many hostile words in order to take the first opportunity to pick a quarrel without reflecting on our brotherhood and peace.'[34] Most galling had been Hattusili's implied threat of military action. 'Further', said Ramesses, 'you brought up the (past) enmity between our lands with your words: "Have you forgotten the days of the enemies from the Land of Hatti?"' This was clearly a reference to the victory claimed by the Hittites at Kadesh. Ramesses was being warned that he might again find himself the victim of Hittite military wrath if he refused to deliver up Urhi-Teshub.

Later in his letter of reply Ramesses would deal with the allegation about Urhi-Teshub. But before moving to this he could not let the Hittite claim about Kadesh pass without challenging it. This for the moment was more important than any attempt to conciliate his royal brother. Hattusili had threatened him with another Kadesh. The implication of the threat was that Ramesses had been *defeated* at Kadesh—thus contradicting the pharaoh's own version of what he saw as his greatest and most glorious military achievement. The Hittite claim could not go unchallenged! Ramesses had to set the record straight with yet another account, for Hattusili's benefit, of what really happened—according to Ramesses—on that fateful day:

> I penetrated, as a matter of fact, into the midst of the enemy from the land of Hatti and struck the enemy, when the army of Muwatalli, king of the Land of Hatti, came together with the many lands which found themselves with him…. And the king of the Land of Hatti fell upon me with his army and all lands which were with him. But I brought about his defeat quite single-handed, although my army was not with me, and my chariots were not with me. And I led the enemy from these lands of Hatti and brought them into the land of Egypt.

Though shorn of some of the bombast of the Kadesh inscriptions on the walls of the Egyptian temples, this reassertion of Ramesses' version of events did nothing to improve relations with Hatti. Yet the pharaoh had been provoked into responding in this way by his royal brother's insistence that it was the Hittites who had won the battle. The matter was never likely to be settled amicably, and

henceforth there appears to have been a tacit understanding between the brother-kings that old wounds would be allowed to heal by saying no more about Kadesh. At least there are no further references to it in the surviving correspondence.

A royal brother's endorsement

Purely pragmatic considerations made it imperative for Hattusili to persist in cultivating good relations with the pharaoh, despite the personal animosity which almost certainly flavoured their relationship. He was, above all, dependent on the pharaoh for recognition amongst his royal peers as the rightful king of Hatti. This needed open acknowledgment by the pharaoh, whose apparent harbouring of the dethroned Urhi-Teshub gave the appearance of Egyptian support for his cause. Still smarting, no doubt, from the snub he had received from the Assyrian king, and probably also from the new king of Babylon, Hattusili was quick to take offence at Ramesses' apparent failure to address him in a manner appropriate to a Great King. Urhi-Teshub, he believed, had something to do with this. 'Why do you write these many words to me as though I were a servant?' Hattusili protested. '*I'm* now king in Hatti, not Urhi-Teshub!'[35]

Ramesses responded indignantly, while at the same time seeking to reassure his new royal brother: 'I have now heard the ungracious word you have written to me,' he wrote:

> That I would have written to you as to a servant from amongst my servants is simply not true! Have you not received the kingship, and did I not know this? Was it not in my heart? You are a Great King in the Hatti Lands! You are a Hero in all lands! The Sun God and the Storm God have granted that you exercise kingship in the Hatti lands in the place of your grandfather. You must not think that I would have written to you as to a servant. The words you should be writing to me are 'May your heart be full of joy every day', not these empty, baseless words! Thus I speak to my brother. It is because of the warm relationship which we have established between us that I have said these words.

Ramesses was being perfectly sincere. It is not altogether surprising that Hattusili took offence at the arrogant, condescending and patronizing tone of the pharaoh's letters to him. But Ramesses probably wrote in much the same way to all his royal brothers. He was, after all, Ramesses of Egypt, and undoubtedly regarded himself as the greatest of all the Great Kings. But in any case Hattusili's ongoing sense of guilt at the way he had obtained his throne—despite his attempts to justify what he had done—and his fear of losing it made him highly sensitive to any perceived slight he suffered, particularly from his foreign peers. In some cases his sensitivity was justified. His first approach to the Assyrian king had met with outright rejection, and Ramesses took delight in reminding him of it. After all, it would do no harm to emphasize how magnanimous he,

Ramesses, was being towards Hattusili compared with a certain other foreign king, and how much, therefore, Hattusili should regard himself as being in his debt.

In fact Ramesses' endorsement of Hattusili may have had a number of valuable consequences. One specific instance concerned the Hittites' western vassal states. Loyalties in the region had been divided between Urhi-Teshub and Hattusili. Kupanta-Kurunta, ruler of the largest and most powerful of these states, had written to Ramesses when he heard of Urhi-Teshub's flight to Egypt, apparently to find out whether Ramesses was supporting the fugitive's bid to regain his throne. We do not have Kupanta-Kurunta's actual letter to the pharaoh, and we cannot tell from Ramesses' reply whether his correspondent was urging him to support Hattusili or Urhi-Teshub. Very likely he did neither. His letter was probably very carefully worded, designed to get the pharaoh to state his position on Urhi-Teshub without in any way compromising his own. Ramesses' response might well have determined whether the western vassal continued to support Urhi-Teshub—as in fact he was strictly bound to do by the terms of the treaty Urhi-Teshub's grandfather Mursili had once drawn up with him.[36] Had he remained loyal to the deposed king and rebelled against Hattusili, the latter's hold over his western states might have been seriously imperilled. But Ramesses came down unequivocally in favour of Hattusili—and did so in very formal terms:

> Take note of the good alliance which the Great King, the king of the Land of Egypt, made with the Great King, the king of the Land of Hatti, my brother, in good brotherhood, in good peace. The Sun God and the Storm God have granted this forever. Take further note: On the matter of Urhi-Teshub about which you have written to me, the Great King, the king of the Land of Hatti, handled the matter as I would have wished.[37]

The letter was intended to impress. But whom, and in what way? Though addressed to Kupanta-Kurunta it was sent not to him but to Hattusa! Was this just a matter of protocol? Professor Beckman remarks that it was not appropriate for the vassal of one Great King to communicate directly with another Great King.[38] But that is precisely what Kupanta-Kurunta had done. It is inconceivable that he had originally sent his letter to Hattusa for inclusion in the diplomatic pouch destined for Egypt—so he must have written to Ramesses without Hattusili's knowledge. It is also inconceivable that Hattusili, or any overlord for that matter, would have consciously allowed any of his vassal rulers to write independently to a foreign king on *any* issue—let alone on the question of who ought to be occupying the throne of the kingdom to which he was subject.

As always, Ramesses made the most of his opportunity. It was no diplomatic courtesy that prompted him to write back to Kupanta-Kurunta via Hattusa. Here was one more way of embarrassing his royal brother, for the pharaoh can have had no doubt that the letter would come into his hands. Hattusili would thus

learn, probably for the first time, that one of his most important vassal rulers had discussed the legitimacy of his position with a foreign king. At the very least this must have been deeply humiliating for Hattusili. Yet he could hardly place any blame on the pharaoh. After all, Ramesses had not initiated his correspondence with Kupanta-Kurunta, had followed appropriate diplomatic procedure in making sure that Hattusili knew about it, and had declared unconditional support for Hattusili in his reply. Of course, there was a subtext to all this. Hattusili was left in no doubt that his claim on the loyalty of his most important western vassal state, and very likely of other states in the region, owed at least as much to the approval of the pharaoh as it did to his own authority. Undoubtedly this enhanced Ramesses' status as the *de facto* senior partner in the brother-king relationship.

The fact that the letter to Kupanta-Kurunta was found in Hattusa indicates that it was never forwarded to its addressee, unless a copy was made of the original.[39] Whether or not its contents were ever communicated to Kupanta-Kurunta was probably of no great concern to Ramesses. What he wrote was intended primarily for Hattusili. But it was clearly in Hattusili's interests to pass on to Kupanta-Kurunta in one way or another the pharaoh's strong endorsement of his position. No doubt he also took the opportunity to deliver a firm rebuke to his vassal for writing to Ramesses in the first place.

Notes

1 Thus Moran (1992:xxiv, n. 59), with refs.
2 In general on Amenhotep's relations with Mitanni, see Kitchen (1998).
3 Mimmureya and Naphurreya (and variations) are the prenomens, respectively, of Amenhotep III and Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten.
4 *EA* 26:25–9, after Moran.
5 *EA* 27:9–12, trans. Moran.
6 Another variant form of Amenhotep III's prenomen.
7 *EA* 29:55–9, after Moran.
8 *KBo* I 10 and *KUB* III 72 (*CTH* 172) obv. 7 ff., trans. Beckman (1996:133).
9 In fact, Akhenaten was the second son of Amenhotep III by his chief wife Tiye. The succession passed to him only after he was predeceased by an elder brother, Tuthmosis.
10 *EA* 29:61–4.
11 Extracts from *EA* 7:8–32.
12 Jönsson (2000:198–9).
13 Adapted from *EA* 15:1–15, and based on trans. by Moran.
14 Kuhrt (1995:350).
15 *EA* 16.
16 *EA* 16:14–18, after Moran.
17 Ashur-uballit also claims that his ancestor Ashur-nadin-ahhe had received the substantial gift of 20 talents of gold (*c*. 600 kg) from Egypt. This, as Zaccagnini (2000:150) points out, can be dismissed as a 'self-serving fairy tale'. There is no

evidence of contacts between Egypt and Assyria in the reigns of either Ashur-nadin-ahhe I (mid-fifteenth century) or II (early fourteenth century). Ashur-uballit himself had already stated (*EA* 15) that none of his predecessors had corresponded with the Egyptian court.

18 Artzi (2000:211).

19 *EA* 9:31–5.

20 As noted in Chapter 3, this was the name by which the remains of the old Mitannian kingdom was now generally known.

21 *KUB* XXIII 102 (*CTH* 171) (=Hagenbuchner 1989:260–4 no. 192) i 5–18, trans. Beckman (1996:138). The identity of the letter's author is still not entirely certain. For its attribution to Urhi-Teshub, see Hagenbuchner (1989: 263), supported by Beckman (1996:138) and Bryce (1998:283). Liverani (2001:42) still favours identifying the author with the Hittite king Tudhaliya IV and the addressee as Tukulti-Ninurta I.

22 In general on the ideology of brotherhood, see Zaccagnini (1987:61–2), Liverani (2001:135–8).

23 *KBo* I 14 (*CTH* 173), rev. 15'–16', trans. Beckman (1996:140). The first few lines of the letter where the author's and the addressee's names would have appeared are missing. However, its attribution to Hattusili is almost certain; and in that case the addressee must be Adad-nirari I. See Beckman (1996:139), Klengel (1992:125, n. 199; 1999:269).

24 *KBo* I 14 rev. 4–10', after Beckman (1996:140).

25 *ÄHK* 5 obv. 10': 24–5.

26 *EA* 33–9.

27 Egypt also obtained copper from Byblos and countries in northern Syria, but Alasiya undoubtedly became its main supplier of the metal.

28 Egypt itself was lacking in silver deposits and obtained its supplies by way of tribute (amongst other means) from its Asiatic territories or by way of trade from Hatti (etc.). Zaccagnini (2000:146) comments that in this context 'silver' simply means 'price' or '(equivalent) value' of any item traded.

29 *EA* 3:18–19, after Moran.

30 *EA* 3:27–9, after Moran.

31 This and the following two passages are from *ÄHK* no. 4:22–5.

32 *ÄHK* 5 obv. 8–9': 24–5.

33 Cf. Edel (1960:20).

34 This and the following quotations (to the end of the next paragraph) are from *ÄHK* 24:58–63.

35 This and the following quotations (to the end of the next paragraph) are compiled from passages in *ÄHK* 20 and 22:50–1 and 53–6, respectively.

36 As in the case of all such treaties, Kupanta-Kurunta was obliged to pledge his allegiance not only to his treaty partner, but also after his death to his successors in the *direct* family line. This applied in the first instance to Muwatalli, Mursili's son and successor, and in the second instance to Urhi-Teshub, Muwatalli's son and successor. By the terms of his treaty agreement he was bound to support Urhi-Teshub over the usurper Hattusili.

37 *ÄHK* 28 obv. 9–13:74–5.

38 Beckman (1996:124).

39 Alternatively, Houwink ten Cate (1974:143) suggests that what Hattusili received was a copy of the letter, whose original was in fact sent directly to Kupanta-Kurunta by Ramesses.

5
GIFT-EXCHANGES

A dazzling array

The ambassadors from abroad had been welcomed by the Great King. They had brought him effusive greetings from their own sovereign lord. They had brought letters too, for His Majesty and other members of his family. And there were gifts, an enormous array of them, all of the finest quality. Such gifts were a fitting way for a Great King to express his unbounded love and esteem for his brother, though he had never met him and in most cases had neither the opportunity nor the least inclination to do so. It was all part of the diplomatic façade that characterized the relations between the rulers of the Great Kingdoms. But the gifts were genuine enough—at least in most cases—even if the accompanying sentiments were not. Their uncrating might be the occasion for a great gathering of dignitaries, both those of the king and sometimes also those visiting from other lands—for a dazzling display of precious items sent by a potentate from a distant kingdom gave tangible demonstration of the high international regard in which His Majesty was held. Of course, it was wise to preview the contents of the crates before they were unpacked to ensure that the show would fully meet expect ations. And that no doubt was one of the reasons why the senders of gifts were often obliging enough to itemize in their letters precisely what the recipient was getting.

Gold, gold and more gold! The precious metal figured prominently in the meticulously detailed inventories of goods dispatched by the pharaoh to his royal brothers, for gold more than any other substance became the hall-mark of Egypt's material wealth. There was an almost limitless range of objects fashioned in the metal or plated with it: figurines, oil-containers, cosmetics flasks, razors, ladles, goblets, necklaces, bracelets, finger-rings, wooden chariots overlaid with gold, gold-plated cedar ships, beds and headrests, chairs and thrones. In a single consignment of gifts sent by Akhenaten to the Babylonian king Burnaburiash the total weight of gold amounted to some 1,200 minas, approximately 600 kilograms.[1] To this we must add a large array of items wrought in silver—washing bowls, measuring flasks,pails, sieves, ladles (some used for curling the hair), thrones, mirrors, cosmetics vessels and the occasional

novelty item, like a silver monkey with a baby in her lap. There were numerous items in bronze and stone. And there were delicately wrought objects in ebony and ivory, the latter including combs, and oil-containers shaped like oxen or decorated with apples, pomegranates and dates. Add to all this an abundance of linen cloth and linen garments of the finest quality—over 1,000 individual pieces.

All items were individually described and listed in their appropriate categories, arranged according to the materials of which they were made. In the case of multiple items the actual number of pieces was carefully recorded, so too the total weights, respectively, of the objects wrought in gold, silver and bronze. 'I have listed all that the bride will bring', Hattusili had written to Ramesses, promising him that his daughter's dowry would surpass those of the other foreign princesses sent to him from the lands of Babylon and Zulabi.[2] Every item was ticked off and weighed, piece by piece, before it was crated and the crates sealed. The inventory was sent with the goods. At the other end, every item was ticked off and weighed, piece by piece, after the seals had been officially broken and the crates unloaded. There could be little opportunity for pilfering or embezzlement in between. That at least was the theory!

Gifts to the pharaoh from the kingdom of Mitanni were similarly itemized in precise detail. The wedding presents which accompanied the Mitannian princess Taduhepa to Egypt for her marriage to Amenhotep III[3] matched in their variety and quality gifts sent to Mitanni from the Land of the Nile. Personal jewellery, ornaments, figurines, cosmetics flasks, bowls, goblets, oil-containers and other utensils wrought in gold, silver, bronze, alabaster and ivory, and a range of more exotic precious substances, figured prominently in the inventory of gifts dispatched to Egypt by Tushratta, King of Mitanni. Objects of iron too appear in the list. (We shall have more to say about this metal.) Lapis lazuli, much prized in Egypt and obtainable only from foreign sources, decorated a range of objects, from flywhisks to daggers. There were shoes, leggings, and garments and caps of dyed wool or linen. There were chests of ebony wood. Ceremonial weapons and armour appeared throughout the consignment—axes, spears, javelins, daggers, arrows, maces, cuirasses and helmets. Horses were included amongst the gifts, and a gold chariot. With them came many accessories—bridles, halters, reins, yokes, many overlaid or inlaid with precious metals or ivory. The horses were of the very best quality, for the Hurrians were the finest breeders and trainers of horses in the Late Bronze Age world.

Generosity and munificence were matters of great importance in gift-exchanges between royal courts. Lavish provision of gifts for a royal brother contributed much to the prestige of the giver. It demonstrated the wealth and prosperity of his kingdom; it provided an exposition of all the material resources at his disposal. It was also a measure of his love for his royal brother. The more generous the gifts, the greater the love. That at least was the theory. 'If you are graciously inclined to friendship with me.' the Assyrian king Ashur-uballit wrote to Akhenaten, 'send me much gold.'[4] In a letter to Akhenaten, the Babylonian

king Burnaburiash II referred to the great quantity of gold that Akhenaten's father had sent to Kurigalzu, his predecessor but one.[5] That gift provided clear proof, to other kings, of the friendship, brotherhood and peace which bound together the rulers of Babylon and Egypt.

Of course the size and opulence of the gift consignments we have described went well beyond what a recipient could reasonably expect on a routine basis. On this scale they generally marked special occasions. Royal weddings provided opportunities for the most generous gift-exchanges, in the form of bride-prices and dowries. Tushratta sent a large number of male and female slaves—270 women and thirty men—to Amenhotep III as part of his wedding present, along with ten teams of horses and ten fully equipped wooden chariots. A coronation was also an occasion for gift-giving—though a foreign king might need to be reminded of this. As we noted in the previous chapter, Hattusili was quick to complain to his Assyrian counterpart Adad-nirari when the latter failed to send him greetings-gifts on his accession.

During the course of regular diplomatic exchanges between royal courts gift-giving was usually on a more modest scale. The Babylonian king Burnaburiash sent Akhenaten a greeting-gift of ten pieces of unworked lapis lazuli, and to his queen twenty 'crickets' fashioned from the same material. To help furnish Kadashman-Enlil's new palace, Amenhotep III sent the Babylonian king a bed of ebony overlaid with gold and ivory and ten ebony chairs overlaid with gold. Ramesses received horses from Hattusili's court, a golden goblet encrusted in precious stones, a second copied in the Babylonian manner and decorated with a fine gold relief, and an ebony bed inlaid with gold. He also received a gold statue of his royal brother, the Hittite Great King Hattusili, weighing 33½ shekels. Ramesses sent Hattusili an ape. Slaves were exchanged as gifts between Hittite and Egyptian royal courts. Visiting envoys too could expect to receive gifts such as gold, silver and oil from their hosts, sometimes (at least for the highest-ranking officials) scarcely less in value than those they conveyed home to their royal masters.[6]

Gifts were also sent to or received by other members of a Great King's family. Envoys routinely brought presents from their own court, not only for the host king but sometimes also for other members of the royal family and other court dignitaries. Via her messenger Parihnawa, Ramesses' queen Nefetari (Naptera) sent to the Hittite queen Puduhepa a golden twelve-strand necklace, 88 shekels in weight, and a dyed linen garment. The Egyptian prince Sutahapsap sent Hattusili a goblet of fine gold inlaid with the face of an ox with horns of white stone and eyes of black. Its total weight in fine gold was 93 shekels. Ramesses sent the Hittite prince Tashmi-Sharrumma a golden goblet weighing 49 shekels, along with four linen garments.[7] The gifts were accompanied by letters which contained greetings and expressions of goodwill from sender to recipient. Thus Nefetari assured her sister Puduhepa that she and her country were well, hoped that Puduhepa and her country were well, thanked Puduhepa for enquiring after her health, and noted that Puduhepa was writing to her about the peace between

their countries and the warm relationship between their husbands.[8] Of course letters of this kind were purely formula stuff, produced by scribes from a standard template, with probably little or no input from their nominal authors apart from the specification of the gifts to be sent. Though presented in the guise of personal correspondence, the prime purpose of these documents was to itemize and describe the gifts, and to make quite clear who had sent them and who their intended recipients were.[9] We shall discuss below the importance of producing such a record.

Complaints by the recipients

As we have noted, gifts were regarded as a tangible expression of their giver's love and esteem for their recipient. The handing over of them helped create a positive atmosphere for the discussions subsequently to take place between the gift-bearing foreign envoys and their hosts—provided of course that the gifts met their recipient's expectations! At this level, gift-giving had no sense of something freely given and graciously received. On the contrary, it was frequently a major source of dissatisfaction and complaint. Letters from disappointed recipients were full of protests about the stinginess of those who sent the gifts. Sometimes unfavourable comparisons were drawn with presents sent to another Great King or his predecessor. We have already noted Ashur-uballit's complaint to the pharaoh: 'One simply picks up gold in your country as if it were dust. Why are you so sparing of it?…When my ancestor Ashur-nadin-ahhe wrote to Egypt, *he* was sent twenty talents of gold!'[10] 'My brother has failed to send the solid gold statues that your father was going to send', Tushratta complained to Akhenaten. 'Instead you have sent plated ones of wood!'[11]

Tushratta had also protested bitterly to Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep III, after receiving from him what was supposed to be a large consignment of fine gold. Foreign dignitaries had been invited to view the uncrating of the consignment. Its contents would surely leave them in no doubt about how high the Mitannian king stood in his royal brother's esteem and affection. Then, when all were assembled, the crates were unsealed and the gifts revealed. There was a shocked silence. Instead of dazzling the assembled guests with their radiance, the uncrated metal bars could do no more than glimmer dully at them. Then the murmuring began. 'Are these really made of gold?' everyone whispered to each other. They certainly don't look like it!' There could be no doubt. The metal's greyish pallor made it clear to all that it had been heavily adulterated with baser materials. The sight of it was enough to reduce his guests to tears, Tushratta claimed, no doubt indulging in a touch of dramatic licence. 'In Egypt, gold is more plentiful than dust', the guests kept reminding each other. This made the insult all the worse. The pharaoh had claimed that he loved his Mitannian brother very much. But how could he really love someone so much and send him such a gift—especially when in Egypt, as everyone knew, gold lay around everywhere, just waiting to be picked up?[12]

The Babylonian king Burnaburiash had suffered a similar disappointment on receipt of a gift allegedly of pure gold from Akhenaten. Again the greyish pallor of the metal must have betrayed its mixed composition. To be absolutely sure, Burnaburiash had it melted down. He was horrified at the result: 'Forty minas of gold had been brought to me, but I swear that when I put it all into the kiln, not even 10 minas came out!'[13]

It seems inconceivable that the pharaohs would have deliberately insulted their fellow kings by sending them adulterated gold, for that would have reflected as badly upon themselves as upon the recipients. In both the above cases embezzlers had almost certainly been at work. Burnaburiash was in no doubt about this, and advised the pharaoh accordingly:

> My brother must *not* delegate the handling of the gold which he is going to send me to somebody else; my brother must check it *personally,* seal it and then send it to me. My brother certainly did not check the previous cargo of gold which my brother sent. My brother left it to someone else to seal it and dispatch it.[14]

Without doubt, many of the king's own officials and messengers found it difficult to resist the temptation to engage in theft of royal gifts, from petty pilfering to grand larceny, whenever the opportunities arose. Even if the king personally checked and sealed his gifts before their dispatch, as Burnaburiash advised, he could probably still not guarantee that they would reach their recipient in an intact state. No doubt there were experts in the art of resealing crates after their original seals had been broken and their contents tampered with, in such a way as to leave virtually no trace of the offence. We can see, therefore, the importance of itemizing in precise detail the list of goods being sent to a royal court, including the individual and total weights of items made of precious metals, so that the contents of a consignment could be thoroughly checked, and discrepancies noted, at the other end.

Embezzlement of gifts had led to a quarrel between Amenhotep and the Babylonian Kadashman-Enlil. The latter had complained that his envoys to the pharaoh's court had returned home empty-handed—with no gifts from the pharaoh for his royal brother. 'Not so!' declared Amenhotep:

> Has there ever been an occasion when your messengers have come to me and not received silver, gold, oil, and fine garments in greater abundance than in any other country? Your messengers are not telling the truth! Their mouths have told lies both to your father and to you!

He then added, somewhat petulantly: 'Whether I give them anything or not, they'll still tell lies. So I have decided that in future I will give them nothing!'[15] This act of deception by Kadashman-Enlil's envoys provides another instance of how important it was to send to a recipient a detailed list of the goods dispatched

to him. Of course the effectiveness of so doing depended on how certain the giver could be that he was entrusting the inventory of items to a messenger who would remain independent of those responsible for the actual transport and delivery of the gifts. Inventories might have been just as susceptible to tampering as the consignments whose contents they recorded.

The ethics of gift-exchange

At all events, in the royal correspondence the term 'gift' is something of a misnomer. In effect, gift-exchange amounted to an elite form of trading between royal courts. But no king would refer to it as such. Indeed it would have been entirely inappropriate for kings to engage directly in mercantile activities, especially with one other. Such activities were fitting only for mortals of a lower order. There were only two honourable ways for a king to acquire precious goods: through receiving them as gifts or tribute, or through booty and plunder. The former was really a form of commercial activity, but under the guise of gift-exchange—of gifts given and received as tokens of the mutual love and devotion and respect two kings had for each other. This is consistent with the 'brotherhood' image. Brothers do not trade with each other, for trade involves making profit at someone else's expense. Brothers may, however, exchange gifts of equivalent value.[16]

The concept of gift-exchange had another dimension as well. In normal trading enterprises one traded for items of which there was a lack and for which there was a need in one's own country. But a Great King liked to project an image of total self-sufficiency. His kingdom possessed all the resources it needed. In such a context the gifts he received were not necessities. But he welcomed those sent to him, as a token of the warm relations he enjoyed with their sender. 'I am told that in my brother's country everything is available and my brother needs absolutely nothing. So too in my own country everything is available and I too need absolutely nothing,' Burnaburiash wrote to Akhenaten. 'But since we have inherited warm relations from our predecessors, let us send greetings (-gifts) to each other.'[17] If we think of the term 'greetings-gift' as a diplomatic euphemism for high- level trade, often in luxury items, then we can more readily understand the apparent churlishness of the receivers of such gifts when they believed that they had received less than their due. Much was based on a system of calculated equivalences between what had been given and what was received, another important reason for the precise itemizing of gifts.

It is in this context too that we should consider the frequent demands which the pharaoh received from his royal brothers. The king of Alasiya sent Akhenaten[18] a list of gift-requests which included large quantities of the finest silver, an ox, two containers of sweet oil and an expert in vulture augury.[19] But the most common requests to the pharaoh were for large quantities of gold. Burnaburiash wrote scornfully of the paltry 2 minas Akhenaten had sent him. This was quite inadequate for the extensive work he was currently engaged in on

his temple. 'Send me as much gold as your ancestors sent,' he requested, 'or if gold is scarce, half as much.'[20] Tushratta asked Amenhotep to treat him ten times better than he did his father and to show him much more love. In other words, he wanted the pharaoh to send him large quantities of gold, in this case partly as a bride-price for his daughter Taduhepa, partly for the building of a tomb.[21] Shortly after the wedding, Tushratta asked Amenhotep to send him a gold statue of his daughter, now the pharaoh's wife.[22] He sincerely hoped that his royal brother and new son-in-law would not make his heart sad by refusing the request. A nice touch of sentimentality, perhaps; the Mitannian king was sorely missing his beloved daughter and wanted some tangible reminder of her. Either that or he was doing some creative thinking about new ways of persuading his royal brother to top up the supply of gold he sent to Babylon.

That raises a significant point. The pharaoh's royal brothers seem to have been most anxious to avoid any impression that their demands for gold were governed by any desire to accumulate precious materials for their own sake. Rather, the materials they requested were for quite specific purposes. It was perfectly acceptable for a Great King to use gold in the building of a temple or a tomb, or for making a statue. But it was decidedly unacceptable for him to hoard it, or, worse still, to use it as a form of currency. That would down-grade the noble practice of royal gift-exchange to the level of mere huckstering.[23] A Babylonian king, probably Kadashman-Enlil I, made the dispatch of one of his daughters as wife for the pharaoh conditional upon his receiving the gold he had requested. But this gold was required for a specific building project. He stressed that he was not seeking it for its own sake. Once the stated deadline had passed, he would no longer need or want it:

> When I have finished the work I am engaged on, what need will I have of gold? Then you could send me 3,000 talents of gold (*c.* 90 tonnes!) and I would not accept it. I would send it back to you, and I would not give my daughter in marriage.[24]

It should also be said that the demands which Great Kings made for gifts were sometimes accompanied by generous open-ended offers to the givers. 'My brother has but to write to me asking for whatever he wants,' wrote Burnaburiash to Akhenaten, 'and it will be taken from my house.'[25] So too, the king of Alasiya promised to send the pharaoh whatever he wanted, above all as much copper as he wanted. And Tushratta's request for large quantities of Egyptian gold was balanced by the magnificent array of wedding presents which he sent to Egypt with his daughter.

Nonetheless, there can be little doubt that the pharaoh's royal brothers greatly overestimated the supply of gold available from Egypt, even after the more intensive exploitation of the gold deposits in Nubia under Ramesses II. The northern kings clearly thought in terms of totally unlimited quantities of the precious metal. 'One just picks it up like dust in your country', they were fond of

saying. Even aside from their often unrealistic expectations, there were other factors to be considered. While it may have been a point of honour to fulfil a royal brother's request, this set a precedent for future requests, from brother-kings as well as from the successors of the king who had made the request. All expected to be treated with the same or greater generosity. A foreign envoy may often have had the delicate task of negotiating with his master's royal brother over his gift-demands, perhaps in some instances seeking to persuade him to moderate them.

There was another aspect of the gift-giving system whose importance can hardly be overestimated. It had to do with a Great King's status, both internationally and amongst his own subjects. We have noted a recipient's readiness to complain if he believed the gifts he received were inferior to those which the giver had sent to his predecessor or to the king of another country. This was not just a matter of greed or petty jealousy. To be sent an inferior gift by a fellow Great King was an act of humiliation, one likely to diminish the recipient's status in the eyes of other Great Kings, as well as in the eyes of his own subjects and vassals. Such things were closely monitored and widely reported.[26] We have noted that the arrival of gifts from a foreign king was often the occasion for a public gathering when the gifts were uncrated and put on display. And we can well understand the intense embarrassment and humiliation Tushratta felt when the pharaoh's gift of visibly adulterated gold was uncrated in the presence of visiting dignitaries. To receive such inferior stuff was a massive, highly demeaning insult.

Again, we must stress the close and direct link between gift-giving and the esteem in which the recipient was held by the giver. Gifts were referred to in the letters as tangible expressions of close personal relationships. In actual fact they made strong political statements. In a world that was built on powerful strategic alliances, it was essential that your brother-king deal with you, and be seen to deal with you, on terms of absolute parity, and that he treat you with no less respect than he did the other Great Kings with whom he was allied. Gift-giving provided one of the most readily demonstrable measures of a king's standing amongst his royal peers. It was the political implications of Adad-nirari's failure to send gifts to Hattusili on his accession rather than the gifts themselves that had caused the Hittite king such concern.

Excuses were sometimes made for delays in sending gifts. After inviting the pharaoh to ask for as much copper as he wanted, the king of Alasiya then warned him not to be concerned if it took some time to arrive. Plague had struck the land of Alasiya. The hand of (the god) Nergal has now fallen upon my country,' he wrote. 'He has slain all the men of my country, and not one copper-worker is left.'[27] Bad weather conditions could also delay the sending of large consignments of gifts, as Burnaburiash informed Akhenaten:

> I have been informed that travel is difficult. The weather is hot and the water has been cut off. So at present I'm not sending you a large number of fine greeting-gifts, just a routine gift of four minas of fine lapis lazuli and

> five teams of horse. As soon as the weather improves, I will get my messenger to bring my brother many fine gifts.[28]

Adad-nirari had written to Hattusili asking him to send a gift of iron, at that time considered a very rare and precious metal. Of the small number of attested iron artefacts in the Late Bronze Age the majority were probably fashioned from chunks of the metal found in its natural state—that is, meteoritic iron. The Hittites in particular may have developed very rudimentary techniques for extracting and working the metal, but from a practical point of view the product was far inferior to bronze. It was nonetheless highly prized and was used in the manufacture of writing tablets, jewellery and ceremonial weapons, the latter two sometimes sent as gifts for royalty.[29] Tushratta's consignment of wedding gifts to accompany his daughter to Egypt included a couple of iron hand bracelets overlaid with gold and an iron mace and dagger blade also overlaid with gold. But iron objects in gift consignments were vastly outnumbered by the artefacts fashioned from other precious metals. Adad-nirari had probably overestimated the Hittites' iron-producing capacity., and was advised by Hattusili that his order could not at present be filled. He was, however, sent a token gift, with the promise of more to come when the time was appropriate:

> In regard to the good iron about which you wrote to me—good iron is not available in my armoury in the city of Kizzuwadna. I have written that it is a bad time for making iron. They will make good iron, but they have not yet finished it. When they finish it, I will send it to you. For the moment I have sent you a dagger blade of iron.[30]

The hazards of transporting gifts

Gathering items for a consignment of gifts was one thing. Safely transporting them to their destination was another. Weather conditions could be a major hazard, as Burnaburiash noted, especially for a convoy, which was inevitably slow moving. And brigands must have been a constant and serious menace. The fact that a convoy was travelling On His Majesty's Service gave no guarantee of its security from attack. No matter how tight the control a Great King believed he had over his vassal territories, travel through them was always a dangerous enterprise, especially for those conveying valuable goods. Royal caravans were not safe even from a brother-king's own subjects. Burnaburiash wrote to Akhenaten complaining that on two occasions caravans from Babylon with gifts for the pharaoh had been robbed en route—by the pharaoh's own officials![31] Akhenaten's rogue vassal ruler Aziru complained that half the gifts sent him by the pharaoh, including all the gold and silver, had been stolen by an Egyptian official called Hatip.[32] Ordinary merchants travelling through the Syrian region were frequent victims of robbery and murder. Burnaburiash had cause to write again to Akhenaten complaining that Babylonian merchants had been waylaid,

robbed and killed in Canaanite territory by the pharaoh's subjects. 'Bring the culprits to justice,' Burnaburiash demanded, 'and make compensation for the money they stole. Execute those guilty of murdering my subjects, and so avenge their blood!'[33] Yet vengeance was not the only motive for Burnaburiash's demand. 'If you do not execute these men,' he warned, 'they will kill again, whether it's a caravan of mine or of your own messengers. That will result in messengers between us being be cut off!'[34] This was a direct appeal to the pharaoh's own self-interest.

Even the smallest consignment of gifts required protection by a military escort of sufficient size to deter attack. A single mission from, say, Akhetaten to Babylon tied up a significant number of troops and possibly charioteers for many months of the year. Goods were mostly carried overland by donkeys, although, where appropriate, coastal shipping might be used for part of a journey.[35] The logistical problems of transportation increased significantly when the gifts included human beings and livestock. The dowry accompanying the Hittite princess sent to Egypt to marry Ramesses II included horses, cattle and sheep, and a number of prisoners taken by the Hittites in their wars with the Kaska people from Anatolia's Pontic region. Arrangements to ensure their safe transportation to Egypt were the subject of several letters passing between Ramesses and Puduhepa. We shall return to these in the next chapter, within the context of preparations for the great wedding which helped consolidate the union between the royal houses of Hatti and Egypt.

Notes

1 *EA* 14. Sommerfeld (1995:920) notes that the intensive relations with Egypt brought so much gold into Babylonia that for more than 100 years after Burnaburiash II gold replaced the traditional silver as the usual stand ard of equivalence. (Weight equivalences: 1 talent (*c*. 30 kgs.)=60 minas; 1 mina=60 shekels.)
2 *ÄHK* 54 obv. 8–11': 140–1.
3 There were in fact two inventories of gifts: *EA* 22 and 25. Kitchen (1998: 258) comments that one set is clearly intended for the pharaoh himself, with chariots, weapons, etc. (*EA* 22); the other set is a dowry fit for a princess (*EA* 25), with its earrings, toggle pins, bracelets, mirrors, combs, necklaces, ointment vessels, etc.
4 *EA* 16:32–3.
5 *EA* 11: rev. 19–20.
6 See Oller (1995:1,469).
7 Further on the personal gifts sent by Ramesses and his family, see Cochavi-Rainey (1999:195–210).
8 *ÄHK* 12:40–1, trans. Beckman (1996:123).
9 Cf Zaccagnini (1987:60–1).
10 *EA* 16:14–21. On the implausibility of Ashur-uballit's appeal to precedent on this occasion, see Chapter 4, n. 17.
11 *EA* 27:32–3, after Moran.

12 Based on *EA* 20:46–59.
13 *EA* 7:71–2.
14 *EA* 7:64–70.
15 *EA* 1:67–77.
16 On the determination of the value of a gift item, see Zaccagnini (1987: 58).
17 *EA* 7:33–8, after Moran. See also Liverani's comments (2001:155).
18 The pharaoh addressed in his letters is actually unnamed, but is almost certainly Akhenaten.
19 *EA* 35:19–26. For the surprising nature of the last of these requests, see Moran's comments (1992:109, n. 6).
20 *EA* 9:12–13.
21 *EA* 19:54–8.
22 *EA* 24: iii 76–107.
23 Cf. Zaccagnini (1987:59), Liverani (2001:156–7). On the other hand, the Alasiyan king's demands to the pharaoh for 'silver' in exchange for copper (*EA* 35 and 37) seem to come close to straightforward mercantile transactions; cf. Avruch (2000: 155).
24 *EA* 4:47–50, after Moran.
25 *EA* 7:61–2.
26 Cf. Zaccagnini (2000:151).
27 *EA* 35:13–14, trans. Moran.
28 *EA* 7:53–60. We have discussed, in Chapter 4, another possible implication of this excuse.
29 For a comprehensive list of references to iron artefacts in Hittite texts, see Košak (1986).
30 Hattusili's letter to Adad-nirari I (*KBo* I 14) obv. 20'–4', trans. Beckman (1996: 140).
31 *EA* 7:73–82.
32 *EA* 161:41–6.
33 *EA* 8:26–9, after Moran.
34 *EA* 8:30–4, after Moran.
35 On land and sea transport between Egypt and other Near Eastern lands, see Tyldesley (2001:63). More generally on transport in the ancient Near East, see Astour (1995:1,401–20).

6
THE MARRIAGE MARKET

On the way home from his Syrian command the Hittite prince Hattusili, later King Hattusili III, passed through Lawazantiya, the well-known cult centre in the country of Kizzuwadna. Here he met his future wife Puduhepa, daughter of the Hurrian priest Pentipsharri. The goddess Ishtar told Hattusili in a dream that he was to marry Puduhepa: The goddess gave us the love of husband and wife,' he declared, representing the marriage as one quite literally made in heaven. Hattusili may in fact have been smitten by Puduhepa's charms the first time he set eyes upon her, with or without the goddess's help. But love as an initial basis for marriage was a rare if not unique phenomenon in the world of ancient Near Eastern royalty.

Traffic in royal brides

As in monarchical societies throughout history, royal marriages in the Late Bronze Age were an important means of reinforcing political and military alliances between kingdoms. In this respect princesses were a valuable diplomatic asset. A Great King blessed with many daughters had at his disposal a ready supply of princesses from whom brides could be selected for dispatch to the marriage beds of his royal brothers. Concubinage helped maintain this supply. A harem of secondary wives and concubines was as much a practical requirement of kingship as it was a status symbol or a recreational facility for His Majesty's pleasure. Queen Puduhepa informs us that the Hittite court was already full of princes and princesses, presumably at various stages of development, when she first entered it as her husband's consort. And His Majesty must have been able to choose from a range of princesses of suitable age when a royal brother requested the hand of one of his daughters. In most cases the highest-ranking daughters, i.e. daughters of the king's chief wife, were reserved for the most important marriage alliances. But personal qualities were also important. In addition to other accomplishments she might have had, a bride intended for a Great King was expected to be a woman of surpassing beauty.

It is not clear whether the bridegroom-to-be's envoys had the right of an early inspection of the bride, once she had been chosen by her father, in order to confirm her suitability for their king. But presumably the bride-groom had some

means of ensuring that he was not acquiring a pig in a poke. Of course it, would not have been in a Great King's interests to send his prospective son-in-law a bride likely to displease him. And in any case there was at least one opportunity for an inspection of the bride before the prenuptial arrangements were finalized. An envoy was sent from her prospective husband's court to complete the arrangements by seeing the bride and anointing her. This may have been only a formality, though it provided the opportunity for the groom's representative to satisfy himself that the bride was in good condition and measured up to other expectations. We know of no case where any last-minute problems arose in this respect. On the contrary, the bridegroom's envoy always spoke most positively of the chosen one, as Amenhotep's envoy Mane did when he saw Tushratta's daughter: 'I showed to Mane the daughter requested by my brother. And when he saw her, he praised her greatly.'[1]

So too, when Amenhotep proposed a marriage alliance with the Arzawan king Tarhundaradu, he arranged for an inspection before the anointing: 'Behold, I have sent to you Irshappa, my messenger (with the instruction): "Let us see the daughter whom they will offer to My Majesty in marriage. And he will pour oil on her head."'[2] In actual fact this was one marriage which never took place, not because of any shortcomings on the part of the bride, but because it was overtaken by events, with the restoration of Hittite authority through Anatolia and the consequent loss of Arzawa's short-lived status as the pre-eminent power in the region. Its king was no longer important enough to warrant the privilege of membership in the ranks of the pharaoh's fathers-in-law.

One significant qualification must be noted to what we have said above. Traffic in brides when Egypt was involved was very much a one-way process. The pharaoh was always willing to receive foreign brides of suitable status into his own household, but never countenanced the export of Egyptian princesses to the households of his royal brothers. It was an established tradition to which there could be no exception. This was certainly not due to a shortage of pharaoh's daughters, of which there must have been an abundant supply (albeit of varying importance in the royal hierarchy depending on the status of their mothers). Nor was it due, as has sometimes been suggested, to any concern about an Egyptian princess dying abroad and thus being deprived of the burial procedures which would help ensure her immortality. Rather, it was a case of pharaonic hubris, of maintaining the pharaoh's self-assumed image as the senior member of the club of royal brothers.[3] For a foreign ruler to send one of his daughters to the Egyptian court as a bride for the pharaoh with no prospect of receiving an Egyptian princess in return was an implicit acknowledgement of the pharaoh's super ior status, at least to the Egyptian way of thinking. And it appears that foreign kings were prepared to go along with this, since the ban on princess export from Egypt applied equally to them all, and the political, strategic and material benefits of regular diplomatic relations with Egypt clearly made up for the one-sided marriage arrangements on which the pharaoh insisted.

Nonetheless the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil decided to put the policy to the test. He wrote to Amenhotep III with a request for his daughter's hand in marriage. The reply was blunt: 'Never since the beginning of time has the daughter of the king of Egypt been given in marriage to anyone!' Kadashman-Enlil persisted. 'You're the king', he declared. 'You can do whatever you like.' The pharaoh remained adamant, so Kadashman-Enlil tried another tack. He came up with the idea that his royal brother could satisfy his request while still adhering to Egyptian tradition—by sending him a fake princess. 'Someone in Egypt must have beautiful grown-up daughters available,' he said. Why not send me *any* beautiful woman, as if she were your daughter? Who would say "She's not the daughter of the king?"'[4] What he was suggesting was a blatant act of deception. And of course it missed the point of *why* the pharaohs never sent their daughters to marry foreign kings. It all had to do with the pharaoh's image, and people's perception of that image. If in fact a fake princess were successfully passed off as the genuine article, then, irrespective of the truth of the matter, the *perception* would be that the pharaoh had broken with tradition and made a concession never before granted to a foreign ruler—for no foreigner could be considered worthy of the honour of receiving a princess of Egypt. Such a perceived break with longstanding tradition might have done much to enhance the status of the Mitannian king in the eyes of his peers and his subjects. But it would surely have diminished the pharaoh's status! There can be little doubt that Amenhotep gave his correspondent very short shrift.

This raises a further question. How certain could a king be that his bride was in fact genuine fruit of his royal brother's loins? Deceptions of the kind proposed by Kadashman-Enlil may not have been uncommon. The prenuptial visit by the bridegroom's envoy to the court of his intended no doubt provided some opportunity for confirming her authenticity. But problems of identification might well have surfaced from time to time. Sometimes a princess's own countrymen had difficulty in recognizing her. One such instance of this led to tensions in the marriage negotiations between Kadashman-Enlil and Amenhotep over a new Babylonian bride for the pharaoh. Amenhotep had asked for the hand of the Babylonian princess. This presented Kadashman-Enlil with something of a dilemma. His sister had already been sent to Egypt as Amenhotep's bride—during the reign of his predecessor—and no more had been heard of her. Kadashman-Enlil's own envoys had travelled to Egypt to see her, but were unable to confirm whether she was dead or alive. To be sure, Amenhotep had produced a woman from amongst his wives and declared that *she* was the Babylonian princess. But the envoys were suspicious. They failed to recognize her as the sister of their king, and thus they reported to him. Kadashman-Enlil sent a complaint to his royal brother, the gist of which was: 'My father sent you my sister as your bride. She's disappeared. And now you're asking for my daughter as well?'

Amenhotep was quick to take issue with him. 'The men you sent were nobodies,' he claimed:

> One of them was even a herder of asses! There was no-one among them who was close to your father and who knew your sister and could identify her. Why did you never send one of your dignitaries who knows your sister, who could speak with her and identify her? If you did that they would tell you the truth, that she is alive and well. They could visit her quarters, and see the relationship she enjoys with the king! If she were dead, why would I conceal the truth from you?[5]

We do not know whether or not the matter of the missing sister was ever resolved, but, even aside from this, the relationship between the Babylonian and Egyptian kings seems to have been an uneasy and often acrimonious one. One suspects that Kadashman-Enlil's sister was in fact still alive, but very likely had been consigned to obscurity in the pharaoh's household. Had she been given the opportunity of a meeting with Kadashman-Enlil's envoys, it is quite possible that she would not have presented a very favourable picture of what life was like for a foreign princess once the fanfare of the wedding had passed and she had become merely an insignificant part of her husband's domestic establishment. In negotiating a further marriage with a Babylonian princess Amenhotep may well have believed it was to his advantage to keep his current Babylonian wife isolated from those sent to check up on her.

Downsides of the international marriage market

There were a number of occasions when marriage links, or intended marriage links, between royal households had unfortunate outcomes. Burnaburiash II's daughter, who married the Hittite king Suppiluliuma, was arguably the most powerful and certainly the most dangerous and disruptive of all Late Bronze Age royal wives imported from abroad. Suppiluliuma had set aside his Hittite wife to marry this Babylonian princess, conferring upon her the name and title of Tawananna, his consort-in-chief. From what her stepson Mursili tells us, she soon became a pernicious influence in the kingdom, tyrannizing the royal household both during and after her husband's reign, introducing undesirable foreign customs into the kingdom, advancing her favourites and murdering her stepson's wife, before finally being stripped of her authority and sent into exile. There was unrest in Babylon when one of Burnaburiash's sons, Karaindash, became the husband of an Assyrian princess sent to marry him by her father King Ashur-uballit. The couple's son Karahardash succeeded to the throne of Babylon. But the union between the royal houses ended abruptly when the new king was assassinated by Babylonian troops resentful of the Assyrian blood that flowed in his veins. In retaliation Ashur-uballit attacked Babylon and executed the king set up in his place (see Chapter 1). So too, Suppiluliuma launched a retaliatory attack on Egyptian territory when his son Zannanza, sent to Egypt to marry the widow of Tutankhamun, died en route under mysterious circumstances. Suppiluliuma held the Egyptians directly responsible for his death

(see Chapter 11). The marriage of the Hittite king Tudhaliya IV to (probably) another Babylonian princess resulted in a fresh outbreak of disruption and faction strife within the Hittite royal household when the new queen squabbled with her mother-in-law, the formidable Puduhepa, and led a faction opposed to her and her supporters.[6] At vassal-state level, a marriage contracted between Ammishtamru II, the young king of Ugarit, and the daughter of Benteshina, king of Amurru, ended in a messy, acrimonious divorce—and quite possibly the princess's execution.[7]

So marriage-alliances between royal houses could prove hazardous—sometimes, indeed, before the marriages actually took place. Even the journey undertaken by a royal bride or groom to his or her new home was not without its risks. A strong escort was essential in such cases. This point was made by Burnaburiash, who was preparing to send off another of his daughters, this time to Egypt, to become a wife of Akhenaten,[8] apparently as a replacement for an earlier intended who had died. Burnaburiash complained about the meagre bodyguard provided by Akhenaten to escort the bride to Egypt: 'Haya (an Egyptian official) has but five chariots with him. Are they really going to escort her to you with just five chariots? Should I let her depart from my house under these conditions?' Undoubtedly Burnaburiash's chief concern was for his daughter's safety. But he was also worried about the humiliation he would suffer in the eyes of other kings from his daughter being accorded such a niggardly escort: 'My neighbouring kings would say: "They have used only five chariots to transport the daughter of a Great King to Egypt!"'[9] Burnaburiash then went on to remind the pharaoh that in the previous generation his father Amenhotep III had provided no less than 3,000 soldiers to accompany a Babylonian princess to Egypt.

To be the daughter of a Great King was not a privilege greatly to be envied. Indeed, princesses were often little better than high-class chattels, sometimes being treated as mere items for barter. As we have noted, the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil made the granting of his daughter's hand to Amenhotep conditional upon the latter sending him the gold he had requested for his building programme. Blatantly mercenary demands of this kind sometimes provoked a well-merited rebuke: 'It is a fine thing that you give your daughters in order to acquire a nugget of gold!' Amenhotep wrote back in disgust to Kadashman-Enlil.[10] Many princesses served as tools of diplomacy to be dispatched to one foreign court or another as best suited the needs of their father's kingdom. Such has, of course, been the fate of princesses in all ages, though the situation was probably worse, by and large, for those who entered polygamous households, especially if, as must often have happened, they came to the country where they were to spend the rest of their lives knowing not a word of its language and little of its customs. A royal bride was accompanied to her new land by a retinue of servants from her own country. (The Mitannian princess Kiluhepa, for example, came to Egypt with an entourage of 317 women.[11]) Their company and attendance must have been of great comfort to her during her settling-in period.

Very likely she was feted and honoured in these early days while wedding celebrations continued. It was probably only later, as she slipped into obscurity, that the support of her own people became particularly important. No doubt her father had promised her on parting that she would receive regular visits from his own envoys to ensure that she was being well looked after. But such visits appear to have been few and far between, and, as we have seen, her new husband and lord might well have prevented access to her by her fellow countrymen.

It was not unusual for a pharaoh to seek more than one bride from the kingdom of one of his royal brothers. As we have seen, Tushratta's daughter was to join her aunt as one of the occupants of Amenhotep III's bedchamber. But the history of marriage-alliances between Egypt and Mitanni began in the days of Amenhotep III's father Tuthmosis IV. The pharaoh wrote to Artatama, then king of Mitanni, requesting the hand of his daughter. Artatama had proved a hard bargainer. There were prolonged negotiations before a settlement was finally reached. In the course of a long letter describing the history of relations between the two kingdoms, Tushratta reminded Akhenaten:

> When your grandfather (Tuthmosis) asked my grandfather Artatama for his daughter, the sister of my father (Shuttarna), he wrote five and six times. But even then my grandfather refused to give her. Only when he wrote to my grandfather a seventh time did my grandfather finally give her.[12]

Tushratta then went on to speak of similarly protracted negotiations between his father, Shuttarna, and Akhenaten's father, Amenhotep, over another Mitannian bride. This was Kiluhepa, Shuttarna's daughter and Tushratta's sister. It was only on the sixth time of asking that Shuttarna, following in his father's footsteps, gave his consent to the union. Tushratta reminded Akhenaten how much better Amenhotep had fared when he had asked for the hand of Taduhepa, Tushratta 's daughter. Her father was much more ready to oblige: 'On the very first occasion (of asking) I said to his messenger "Assuredly I will give her!"'

Why this apparent fondness for Mitannian brides? The point is that royal brides were in a sense like treaties—links not so much between two kingdoms, but between the rulers of these kingdoms. When one treaty partner died, his surviving partner was obliged to draw up a fresh treaty with his successor in order to reaffirm the alliance. So too, a royal bride was a personal link between the king who gave her and the king who received her. On the death of Artatama and Tuthmosis IV, a new bride had to be secured for the new pharaoh as one of the most important elements in the reaffirmation of the Egyptian-Mitannian alliance. This was irrespective of whether Tuthmosis' Mitannian wife still lived or not. Amenhotep had wedded Shuttarna's daughter Kiluhepa. But after her father's death the pharaoh needed a new Mitannian bride. Kiluhepa was now something of an irrelevance, hence his request to the new king Tushratta for his daughter Taduhepa.

By this time Amenhotep's lifespan had probably almost run its course. What happened to Taduhepa after his death? We have noted that she was probably transferred to Akhenaten's matrimonial establishment. Indeed, it has been suggested that she is to be identified with Akhenaten's other consort (after his chief wife Nefertiti), the 'greatly beloved' Kiya.[13] This gives rise to an intriguing possibility. Since as far as we know Nefertiti bore her husband six daughters but no sons, Kiya *may* have been the mother of Tutankhamun. 'Was Kiya's crime', asks Professor Murnane in referring to tensions between Kiya and Nefertiti's daughters, 'that she had trumped her competition by producing what the King's chief wife Nefertiti could not, a male heir?'[14] And if in fact Kiya was the Mitannian princess Taduhepa under her Egyptian name, that might have been a further cause for the hostility of Nefertiti's daughters towards her—a foreign woman giving their father a male heir, something which their own mother had failed to do. The implication of this would be that Tutankhamun was in fact half-Hurrian, and that his maternal grandfather was the Hittites' arch-enemy Tushratta.

The Egyptian—Hittite marriage correspondence

We have no information on the nature of the negotiations between the Egyptian and Mitannian courts which prefaced the final agreement over the marriage between Amenhotep III and Taduhepa. But we gain some idea of the sorts of things that were discussed in the course of marriage negotiations—and the various sticking points that emerged—from the extensive remains of the marriage correspondence exchanged between the Egyptian and Hittite courts during the reigns of Ramesses II and Hattusili III. The negotiations were in this case rather more protracted and complex than they might otherwise have been because of the acrimonious exchanges over the fate of Hattusili's displaced predecessor Urhi-Teshub (see Chapter 13). But the correspondence, which followed in the wake of the famous treaty between the two kings, seems to have begun cordially enough. Hattusili declared that he would give his daughter only to Ramesses, and not to the King of Babylon or the King of Hanigalbat (what was left of the old Mitannian kingdom). Ramesses responded by informing his royal brother that he had received letters from those very kings trying to press their own daughters upon him. But he assured Hattusili that *that* honour was reserved for the Hittite princess alone.

While Ramesses exchanged a number of letters with Hattusili concerning the forthcoming marriage, the chief negotiator on the Hittite side was undoubtedly Hattusili's consort Puduhepa. Indeed 'royal marriage-broker' was one of the many roles for which she assumed or was granted direct responsibility in the conduct of her kingdom's affairs. On largely routine matters to do with the marriage, Ramesses sent letters to both Hattusili and Puduhepa with almost identical wording. The letters addressed to the former satisfied diplomatic procedure, or were sent as a matter of courtesy; those addressed to the latter were

intended to ensure that action was in fact taken on the matters which they raised. On a number of contentious issues the pharaoh wrote to Puduhepa alone. And she wrote back to him entirely on her own authority.

The exchanges between pharaoh and Hittite queen were often less than amicable. For Ramesses one of the chief bones of contention was Hattusa's interminable delays in sending him his Hittite bride. He wrote impatiently about these to Puduhepa: 'My sister, you promised to give me your daughter. That's what you wrote! But you've withheld her and are angry with me. Why have you not now given her to me?' 'I have indeed withheld my daughter,' Puduhepa wrote in reply. 'And you will certainly approve, not disapprove of my doing so.' She had an excuse which could hardly have failed to appeal to Ramesses' mercenary instincts: 'I cannot give my daughter to you right now because, as you well know, the storehouse (treasure house?) of Hatti has been burnt out. Anything that did survive Urhi-Teshub handed over to the Great God.'[15]

The building destroyed by fire had apparently been an important repository of the kingdom's material wealth,[16] including items of the kind which might constitute a royal dowry. The fire had evidently proved a severe economic setback to the kingdom, even though it had occurred some years earlier while Hattusili's nephew still occupied the throne. Puduhepa could not let mention of Urhi-Teshub pass without a sneer: 'Since Urhi-Teshub is there with you, just ask him whether or not this is so.' Her remark was a deliberately pointed one. After losing his throne, Urhi-Teshub had fled his place of exile and eventually found refuge in Egypt. Ramesses had failed to extradite him and later, in response to repeated demands from Hattusili, denied that Urhi-Teshub was any longer in Egypt. 'He has flown like a bird,' he blithely declared, claiming that Urhi-Teshub was back in Hattusili's own territory. (We shall have more to say about this in Chapter 13.) Neither Hattusili nor Puduhepa believed him. Puduhepa left her correspondent in no doubt about this.

While she was about it, she could not resist the temptation of a further jibe against her future son-in-law: his impatience for his bride really had to do with her dowry. One would think from his eagerness to get his hands on it that his own land was poverty stricken!

> Does my brother possess nothing at all? Only if the Son of the Sun-god, the Son of the Storm-god, and the Sea have nothing, do *you* have nothing! Yet, my brother, you seek to enrich yourself at *my* expense! That is worthy of neither your reputation nor your status![17]

After reprimanding Ramesses for his impatience over the delays in sending him his bride, Puduhepa took the opportunity to extol the girl's merits: 'With whom should I compare the daughter of heaven and earth whom I will give to my brother? Should I compare her with the daughter of Babylonia, of Zulabi, or of Assyria?'[18] In other words, if Ramesses could but curb his impatience a little longer, he would find his bride well worth the wait! Indeed the princess destined

to be Ramesses' bride must have been selected and trained by Puduhepa with the greatest care. She could have had no better tutor! Upon her arrival in Hattusa, Puduhepa had found the palace nurseries and playrooms full of little princes and princesses, many no doubt the result of her husband's unions with various secondary wives and concubines.[19] And no doubt their numbers continued to grow. Kings' sons were in heavy demand for military and administrative careers, and for roving diplomatic commissions. Occasionally, too, they were used in marriage-alliances with a foreign kingdom. But princesses, particularly from the highest-ranking mothers, were from their birth potential marriage-alliance material. The more abundant the supply, the greater the likelihood of there being some whose beauty would mark them out as fitting marriage partners of a Great King.

It was probably not even strictly necessary that the girl chosen as Ramesses' bride should be Puduhepa's own offspring. That would certainly have been Ramesses' expectation, and Puduhepa quite explicitly referred to his intended as her own daughter. But the term could very likely be stretched to any of her husband's children who grew up under her tutelage. The emphasis in settling upon a wife for the pharaoh must have been on selecting the choicest flower from the royal crop, and if this happened to be the daughter of another of Hattusili's officially recognized bedmates there was probably no major difficulty in passing her off as a princess of the first order. As long as Ramesses accepted that she was Puduhepa's as well as Hattusili's daughter, that was all that really mattered.

Protracted negotiations over the terms of the marriage settlement inevitably involved much backwards and forwards shuttling of messengers and envoys. This plus the delays in collecting the princess's dowry must have contributed significantly to the lengthy period of time, perhaps several years, between the initial marriage proposal and the completion of all formalities prior to the dispatch of the bride and dowry. The transportation of the dowry was supposed to take place in at least two stages. Puduhepa had written to the pharaoh asking him to send a rider on horseback with documents to complete the formalities for conveying to his land the live-stock and slave component of the dowry. Her request was an urgent one, for there was currently a famine in her country and the departure of the live component of the dowry would ease the pressure on Hatti's food resources. It is clear that this part of the consignment of gifts was intended to precede the main wedding party and the rest of the consignment. Puduhepa complained that Ramesses had not responded to her request—the slaves and livestock were still in Hatti!

Finally all was ready for departure. No doubt still mindful of the fate that had befallen her husband's uncle Zannanza on his way to Egypt to marry Tutankhamun's widow, Puduhepa made elaborate arrangements for the safe conduct of the princess along what must have been much the same route. Hattusili wrote to Ramesses signalling his daughter's readiness to depart: 'Let the people come in order to anoint my daughter's head with fine oil, and may one bring her into the house of the Great King, the King of the Land of Egypt, my

brother!' In joyful response Ramesses wrote back to Hattusili, quoting his words,[20] and to Puduhepa in identical terms:

> Wonderful, wonderful is this situation about which my Brother has written to me. The Sun God, the Storm God, the Gods of the Land of Egypt, the Gods of the Land of Hatti have granted that our two great countries will be united forever![21]

From the travel arrangements referred to in the correspondence, we can follow the progress of the wedding party to Egypt. Puduhepa informed Ramesses that the princess would be escorted by troops from Hatti under the command of a Hittite prince, perhaps Nerikkaili, Hattusili's eldest son.[22] The queen herself would accompany the party as far as the Egyptian border in southern Syria. Ramesses wrote to one of his Canaanite governors in the border region, instructing him to attend to all the needs of the party and its escort once they had entered the pharaoh's lands and came formally under his protection.

Then there was the matter of the livestock and the Kaska people. The pharaoh informed Hattusili that he had instructed two of his provincial governors, in Upi and Canaan, to take charge of the consignment of sheep, cattle and human beings once it had crossed into Egyptian territory.[23] He had also corresponded with Puduhepa on the matter.[24] The Kaskans were well known as a dangerous, aggressive people, even in captivity. No doubt Puduhepa was glad of the opportunity of siphoning off to Egypt some of those who had been taken prisoner and held in custody in her own land. Ramesses declared that they would be welcome in Egypt, but advised the queen to be sure that they were well guarded while still in Hittite custody, so that they would pose no threat to other travellers. Puduhepa was more concerned that they might attempt an escape into the wilderness regions and head back home. She was determined to prevent that. Ramesses shrugged off her concerns: 'If anyone is foolish enough to go into the desert, let him do so, for he will surely perish there!'

Meanwhile, all was in readiness in Egypt. Ramesses had built his bride a fine palace and declared that his bride-gift surpassed that of any other Great King. Finally, after the last long arduous stage of its journey across the Sinai peninsula, the wedding entourage reached its destination. This was Ramesses' brilliant new city Pi-Ramesse in the Delta. The moment now came for the pharaoh to see his Hittite bride for the first time. What did he think of her? In view of the delays in getting her to Egypt and the build-up which Puduhepa and no doubt others had given her, it was all the more important that on her arrival she should meet all his expectations. And this she apparently did. There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of her bride-groom's recorded reaction at their first meeting: She was 'beautiful in the heart of His Majesty, and he loved her more than anything'.[25]

Thus, finally, the marriage took place, in the thirty-fourth year of Ramesses' reign (1245). The pharaoh's initial delight in his new bride recalled her father's love at first sight for her mother when they had met, almost thirty years earlier.

But for her parents Ramesses' love for the princess went far beyond mere sentimentality or parental pride. If this love persisted, their daughter had the potential to become a highly influential figure in her husband's court—which might well have had some very beneficial spin-offs for Hatti. No doubt Puduhepa had trained her for this possibility—and who better than she to do so?

It was by no means an unrealistic ambition. New Kingdom Egypt already had a tradition of strong queens. Names that come readily to mind are Queen Tiye, wife of Amenhotep III, Nefertiti, wife of Akhenaten,[26] Ankhesenamun, wife of Tutankhamun, and Nefertari, wife of Ramesses. Nefertari had probably died by the thirtieth year of Ramesses' reign at the latest.[27] And even if Ramesses' longstanding secondary wife Iset-Nofret had then assumed the role of her husband's chief wife, she too may have died before her husband's thirty-fourth year.[28] In this event, the timing of the new marriage would have been extremely opportune—if it paved the way for the Hittite princess to assume the status of the pharaoh's chief wife. There were precedents for Hittite kings demanding that their daughters become their husbands' principal wives in political marriage-alliances.[29] But until now this had applied only in cases where the husbands were rulers of vassal or protectorate states, and thus the inferiors of their fathers-in-law. There was no clear precedent for a foreign princess becoming the pharaoh's chief wife. Even so, this may have been a condition which Hattusili—or rather Puduhepa—insisted upon in the marriage negotiations. Puduhepa wrote to Ramesses: 'Regarding the daughter that I will give to my brother…, I want to make her superior to all the other daughters of Great Kings; no-one should be able to find (another) beside her!'[30] And a besotted husband, if that is what Ramesses was, may have been only too happy to comply—at least to begin with.

His bride was given the Egyptian name Maat-Hor-Neferure, 'One who sees Horus, the Visible Splendour of Re', and she was in fact granted the status of the pharaoh's chief wife—perhaps in compliance with the prenuptial negotiations. Certainly the monuments of her new land accorded her the full honours to which the First Lady of the Land was traditionally entitled. Even so, one has the uneasy impression that the stigma of being a foreigner was always upon her, and that the period of her glory would not last. Moreover, for all he may have loved his bride for her own sake, Ramesses still represented her and her dowry as tribute brought before him, as tokens of homage paid to him by the Land of Hatti:

> Then the king of Hatti has caused his eldest daughter to be brought with splendid tribute (set) before her, of gold, silver, much bronze, slaves. Spans of horses without limit, and cattle, goats, rams by the myriad, limitless—such were the dues they brought for Ramesses.[31]

The political propaganda is unmistakable, and we see in it a very clear reason why pharaohs never provided their own daughters as brides for foreign kings. For, in Egyptian eyes, the provision of such brides amounted to payment of tribute, an act of homage performed by an inferior to one of superior status.

Ramesses also claimed that the marriage link had greatly strengthened the union between Egypt and Hatti—much to the chagrin of the kings of all other lands! Yet, as subsequent events were to prove, the much-feted marriage was little more than a minor and fairly short-lived by-product of the Egyptian-Hittite political alliance. Hattusili had a particular hope that was not fulfilled, as he wrote in some disappointment to the pharaoh: 'I would have given the land of Hattusa to the son of my daughter, if she had borne a son. But you have sired no son for my daughter. Is it not possible, as has been said, for my brother to sire a son?'[32] The reproach is hardly fair, since Ramesses had given, and for a long time would continue to give, ample evidence of his ability to sire offspring in large numbers of both sexes. Whether or not Hattusili ever really intended that a son of Ramesses by the Hittite princess would one day succeed to Hatti's throne remains uncertain. Hattusili had long groomed his own son Tudhaliya to be his successor, and probably by this time Tudhaliya was already producing sons of his own.

At all events, the beautiful Maat-Hor-Neferure was soon to disappear from the scene. A fragmentary inscription mentions her living in the pharaoh's harem near Fayum, which would seem to indicate her loss of status as chief wife of the pharaoh.[33] But it is hard to believe that Puduhepa would have tolerated this, and we know that relations between Hatti and Egypt remained cordial in the years following the marriage, particularly since a second Hittite princess was sent to Egypt to become the pharaoh's bride, perhaps not long after Hattusili's death. We can hardly imagine that the Hittite court, Puduhepa above all, would have countenanced a second marriage if Ramesses had failed to abide by the terms of the first. The likelihood is that not long after her marriage to Ramesses, a few years at most, Maat-Hor-Neferure died. This, very likely, was the reason the Hittite and Egyptian courts sought a renewal of the personal bond between them through the provision of another Hittite bride for the pharaoh.

Notes

1 *EA* 19:21–2, after Moran.

2 *EA* 31:11–14, trans. Moran. Meier (2000:169) comments that there is no evidence that the anointing of a woman before marriage was an Egyptian custom. Rather, it indicates that Egyptian kings followed the practice of their Near Eastern neighbours in this respect.

3 Bryan (2000:82) sees the prohibition by the eighteenth dynasty pharaohs as a means of protecting themselves against the claims of families outside the dynastic line. Cf. Kitchen (1998:255). It was not in fact until the period of the twenty-first dynasty that an Egyptian princess was sent abroad to marry a foreign king, in this case the Israelite king Solomon.

4 *EA* 4:11–13. The letter almost certainly belongs to the correspondence exchanged between Amenhotep III and Kadashman-Enlil, though the opening lines of the letter which contained the author's and addressee's names are now lost.

5 The quotations in this and the previous paragraph are based on *EA* 1:10–35.
6 See Bryce (1998:331).
7 See Klengel (1992:141–2), Bryce (1998:345–7).
8 *EA* 11.
9 *EA* 11:19–22.
10 *EA* 1:61–2, trans. Moran. As indicated by Moran, the translation is not altogether certain.
11 Information provided by an Egyptian scarab commemorating her arrival in Egypt; see Tyldesley (1999:28).
12 *EA* 29:16–18.
13 See Helck (1984:159–60).
14 Murnane (1995:9).
15 *ÄHK* 105 (*KUB* XXI 38) obv. 8–11': 216–17, adapted from trans. by Beckman (1996:126). We should remember, as discussed earlier, that this particular document is a draft letter from Puduhepa. We cannot be sure how much of what appears in the draft was incorporated into the final version sent to Ramesses.
16 Houwink ten Cate (1994:238) thinks in terms of 'an economic or administrative institution, presumably situated in the capital, but not necessarily forming part of the Palace on the citadel.'
17 *ÄHK* 105 obv. 15'-16': 216–17, after Beckman (1996:127).
18 *ÄHK* 105 obv. 12–13': 216–17, trans. Beckman (1996:126–7).
19 Almost certainly, Puduhepa was not Hattusili's first chief wife, though we have no information about an earlier queen who may have filled this position.
20 *ÄHK* 49 obv. 14–16:130–1.
21 *ÄHK* 51 obv. 17–20:136–7.
22 *ÄHK* 56:146–7.
23 *ÄHK* 54:142–3.
24 *ÄHK* 57:148–9.
25 Trans. Tyldesley (2001:138).
26 It has even been suggested that Nefertiti may for a short time have been her husband's co-regent and successor, that she was in fact Smenkhkare. It is interesting to note, as Tyldesley (1999:80) points out, that Nefertiti is never specifically mentioned in the Amarna letters, and it would seem that to Akhenaten's correspondents she was of negligible significance. Her curious exclusion from the Amarna letters does seem to suggest that her influence at home did not extend into the international arena.
27 See Tyldesley (2001:129).
28 Tyldesley (2001:134).
29 E.g. this was a condition stipulated by Muwatalli in marrying his daughter Massanauzzi to the western Anatolian vassal ruler Masturi, and by Hattusili III in marrying his daughter Gassuliyawiya to the Amurrite king Benteshina.
30 *ÄHK* 106 obv. 5'–9': 224–5, after trans. in Meier (2000:171–2).
31 Extract from Ramesses' 'marriage-stele', trans. Kitchen (1982:86; 1996: 86–96).
32 *ÄHK* 110 rev. 4'–6': 230–1.
33 However, in a personal communication Professor Kitchen has commented that the length of time Maat-Hor-Neferure lived at Fayum is wholly unknown; the fragment mentioning her there could be of any date in the mid to late years of Ramesses' reign.

7
SENDING FOR THE DOCTOR

In search of a miracle

It was probably only as a last resort that Hattusili wrote to Ramesses about the matter. His sister Massanauzzi had failed to bear children, and was now well and truly beyond the normal offspring-producing years. Doubtless the Hittite king had consulted his own medical advisers about her condition, but it required no gynaecological expert to conclude that now she was well into her maturity she could never hope to become a mother. The problem was, her brother was most anxious that she should become one. To advise His Majesty that he was asking the impossible was probably more than any royal physician's job was worth. The alternative was to put off the inevitable and keep his hopes alive for the time being—and if at all possible to shift to someone else the responsibility for ultimately dashing these hopes.

This is a suggested reconstruction of the context in which Hattusili wrote one of his best-known letters to Ramesses.[1] He may have done so at the urging of his advisers, though he could well have taken the initiative himself. After all, Egypt was renowned for its medical expertise, and this expertise could perhaps be called upon to effect the miracle Hattusili was seeking, hence his letter to the pharaoh. No doubt it was written with some reluctance, for it involved the embarrassing admission that the king's own sister had failed to fulfil one of a princess's prime responsibilities—the production of heirs. 'I'd be most grateful', he wrote, 'if you would send me a man to prepare medicines so that my sister may bear children.' He went on to admit that this request was a little unusual, for the princess was no longer a young woman. But he had great confidence in what Egyptian medical science could achieve!

Why was it so important to Hattusili that his sister have a child? She was the wife of one of Hattusili's vassal rulers in western Anatolia, a man called Masturi, king of the Seha River Land. Under Masturi the vassal state had long been loyal to Hatti and was playing a valuable strategic role in the region. But in the past its loyalty had been less reliable. Masturi's father and predecessor Manapa-Tarhunda had broken his allegiance to Hatti in the early days of Mursili II's reign. He had avoided the full force of Hittite retaliation only by a last-minute act of contrition

when a Hittite army under Mursili's personal command had reached his gates and was preparing to take his city by storm. Mursili finally relented and refrained from action when the rebel's mother came out of the city and begged for mercy on her son's behalf.

Deciding to give Manapa-Tarhunda a second chance, Mursili confirmed his position on the vassal throne, and henceforth he appears to have remained loyal to his overlord. But with advancing years he had become an increasingly less effective agent of Hittite interests in his region. From a document commonly referred to as the Manapa-Tarhunda letter we learn that in the reign of Mursili's successor Muwatalli he had attempted unsuccessfully to rescue the vassal kingdom of Wilusa, his neighbour, from a notorious freebooter called Piyamaradu, who was creating havoc in the Hittites' western vassal territories.[2] Piyamaradu had sent him packing, inflicting a humiliating defeat upon him in the process. Muwatalli dispatched a Hittite expeditionary force to deal with Piyamaradu, calling on Manapa-Tarhunda, through whose territory the Hittites would have marched on their way to Wilusa, for military support. But his demoralized vassal, still smarting from his recent drubbing by Piyamaradu and having no great desire for another confrontation, decided that now was as good a time as any to call in sick. He wrote to his overlord pleading his excuses: 'I have become ill. I am seriously ill. I am laid low by illness!'[3]

Muwatalli's troops drove Piyamaradu from Wilusa without Manapa-Tarhunda's help. But the aged and ailing vassal was now becoming a serious liability. Deciding that his occupancy of the vassal throne could no longer be tolerated, Muwatalli replaced him with his son Masturi. It proved a good appointment, and Masturi was rewarded with the hand of his overlord's daughter. This comparatively rare honour accorded to a vassal ruler was accompanied by the proviso that the heir to Masturi's throne was to be a son born to him by his Hittite wife. In this way the vassal throne would be secured for a prince of the Hittite royal line, more particularly of Muwatalli's direct line. But when the tensions between Muwatalli's son Urhi-Teshub and his brother Hattusili erupted into open conflict, Masturi supported the latter, contemptuously dismissing Urhi-Teshub as a mere *pahhurzi,* son of a secondary wife.

From the beginning of his reign, then, Hattusili had at least one staunch supporter among the vassal rulers in the west. The problem was that at the time Hattusili wrote to Ramesses about his sister her husband was rapidly approaching old age and the couple had still not produced a son to succeed to the vassal throne! That gave rise to a dangerously unstable situation, especially as there were influential anti-Hittite elements in his kingdom. Already having to contend with the activities of the Ahhiyawan king and his protégé Piyamaradu in western Anatolia, Hattusili had problems enough in the region without the added danger of losing a valuable western vassal state because its current ruler was likely to die without an heir. We can well appreciate his sense of urgency about getting Masturi a son by his Hittite wife and his willingness to risk humiliation by making a last-ditch appeal to Ramesses to achieve this.

Ramesses made the most of his opportunity. 'Look, I, your brother, know about Matanazi,[4] my brother's sister,' he wrote in reply:

> The word is that she's fifty, if not sixty years old! Look, a woman of fifty is old, to say nothing of a sixty-year-old! No-one can prepare medicines to enable *her* to bear children! Well, the Sun God and the Storm God may give a command, and the order which they give will then be carried out continually for the sister of my Brother. And I, the king your Brother, will send an expert incantation-priest and an expert doctor in case there's any way they can assist her to become pregnant.[5]

This arrogant, condescending response is precisely what Hattusili must have expected from the pharaoh. Ramesses was well aware that his royal brother was understating the princess' age, and was none too subtle in telling him so. In fact, in suggesting that she may have been as old as sixty he was probably very close to the truth—perhaps even erring on the side of generosity! Hattusili and his siblings were the offspring of their father Mursili's first wife Gassul(iy)awiya, who died in the ninth year of Mursili's reign—that is, around 1312. Our letter belongs to the correspondence exchanged between the Hittite and Egyptian royal courts after the conclusion of the treaty between Ramesses and Hattusili—that is, no earlier than 1258 or 1257. Thus the very youngest Massanauzzi could have been when the treaty was drawn up was fifty-five. And she could well have been five years older—or even more! Hattusili was the youngest of the four siblings, and *he* must have been at least fifty-five when he wrote the letter. His sister was likely to have been his senior by at least several years, and the letter may well have been written later than 1257. Thus, even if we take the most conservative view, the princess was clearly pushing sixty when her brother wrote to the pharaoh. Ramesses obviously had inside information. How did he come by it? He probably had at least one reliable informant on such matters at his court—the princess's nephew Urhi-Teshub!

The immediate conclusion of this episode is not known, but we can hardly doubt that it was a foregone one. Further, the fears Hattusili entertained for the future of the vassal kingdom proved fully justified. Masturi still occupied its throne when the succession in Hattusa passed from Hattusili to his son Tudhaliya.[6] But subsequently we hear of an upstart called Tarhunaradu, who either deposed Masturi or seized his throne immediately after his death. The new ruler almost certainly had no connections with his predecessor's family, and may well have taken advantage of the lack of a royal heir to stage his coup. It was precisely the situation Hattusili had been so eager to avoid. What is more, Tarhunaradu had the backing of Ahhiyawa, which leaves no doubt that the vassal state was now firmly in the hands of anti-Hittite elements. From the Hittite point of view, the situation was intolerable. In a swift and decisive campaign, Tudhaliya wrested back control of the Seha River Land and took into captivity the rebel pretender,

along with his family and retinue, and 500 teams of horse. The vassal throne was restored to the family of Manapa-Tarhunda and Masturi.[7]

Benefiting from foreign medical expertise

Hattusili's faith in Egyptian medical expertise, if on occasions somewhat naïve, was shared by many of his contemporaries and successors in later civilizations. According to Homer, Egypt was so rich in medicinal plants that everyone there was a physician, surpassing all others in medical knowledge.[8] Several hundred years after Homer, the Greek historian Herodotos provided a further example of the international reputation of Egyptian medical science, in this case in the treatment of eye diseases. Herodotos reports that the Persian king Cyrus sent a messenger all the way to Egypt during the reign of the twenty-sixth-dynasty pharaoh Amasis (Ahmose II, 570–26) with instructions to bring back for his master the best eye-doctor in the land.[9]

Hattusili too seems to have benefited from Egyptian ophthalmological expertise. The king had been a sickly child, and though, against expectations, he had survived his childhood and gone on to achieve great things, he seems to have been dogged with repeated bouts of illness in his declining years. Chronically inflamed feet and eye disease figured prominently amongst his ailments. The latter had flared up during the final stages of his treaty negotiations with Ramesses, and on hearing about it the pharaoh had arranged a consignment, by express delivery, of 'all good medicines for the eyes of my brother':

> I arranged a chariot-officer to go with Pirihnawa, and the officer went to Benteshina, the prince of the Land of Amurru, with my messenger Pirihnawa. He gave to Benteshina all the medicines which he had brought, and Benteshina dispatched a *sargu*-officer to my brother with the drugs which the king, your brother, had arranged to be brought posthaste to you by the hand of Pirihnawa.[10]

The pharmaceuticals evidently worked, since Hattusili subsequently put in another order: 'Those medicines which you previously sent for my eyes were effective. Please send some more.' Ramesses was happy to oblige: 'I have now arranged for Pariamahu to bring more of those effective medicines for my brother's eyes', he wrote in reply.[11] But he was never one to do things by halves. In another letter to Hattusili, he listed amongst the gifts which he had sent him 'five *kukubu* vessels with excellent drugs for the eyes and twenty baskets with excellent drugs for the eyes'.[12] For good measure, he repeated this information in a parallel letter to Puduhepa.[13]

As we have seen in the correspondence about Hattusili's sister, the pharaoh sometimes sent physicians, at his royal brother's request, to attend upon other members of his family. A further instance of this occurred in the reign of Hattusili's son Tudhaliya IV. The king's cousin Kurunta, ruler of the important

appanage kingdom of Tarhuntassa in southern Anatolia, had been stricken with an illness which failed to respond to the ministrations of the king's own doctors. The illness, whatever it was, had now apparently assumed life-threatening proportions. Kurunta was the brother of Urhi-Teshub, but had to this point proved unswervingly loyal to Hattusili's family and ruled Tarhuntassa effectively as a kind of viceroy. His death could have been a serious setback to Hittite interests. Tudhaliya wrote to the pharaoh describing his cousin's symptoms and requesting Egyptian medical assistance.

Ramesses responded promptly. In a letter free of the usual pharaonic rhetoric, he wrote:

> See, I have now dispatched the scribe and doctor Pariamahu. He has been sent to prepare medicines for Kurunta, the king of the Land of Tarhuntassa, and he will allocate all types of medicines as you have written. As soon as he comes to you, place Kurunta, the king of the Land of Tarhuntassa, in his charge so that he may prepare medicines for him. And dispatch these two doctors, who are there with Kurunta and let them come to Egypt. As soon as the scribe and doctor Pariamahu reaches him, on that day these two doctors must terminate their activity. See, I have understood what you have said. By this time the scribe and doctor Pariamahu is on his way, and he is to administer all types of medication as you have written.[14]

The Egyptian physician's treatment apparently succeeded in curing the ailing Kurunta, a success which Tudhaliya may later have regretted. For it seems that Kurunta subsequently rebelled against his overlord, and for a time may actually have occupied the Hittite throne—before vanishing from our records.

On a number of occasions professional healers may have visited centres of medical science in other lands to learn the latest procedures being practised there, or more specifically to observe at first hand the treatment of a particular illness. This is illustrated by a letter in the Mari archives written by Ishme-Dagan, Assyrian viceroy at Ekallatum, to his brother Yasmah-Addu, viceroy at Mari. Impressed by the success of the treatment he had received from his brother's physician, Ishme-Dagan stated that he was sending one of his own physicians to his brother's court to learn the relevant procedure:

> Tell Yasmah-Addu: Your brother Ishme-Dagan sends the following message: The medication which your physician applied to me in a dressing is extremely good. The wound has begun to disappear; and slowly, slowly, the medication is about to remove it. Now, I am sending to you with this letter the physician Shamshi-Addu-tukulti. Let him have a look at that medicine and then send him back immediately.[15]

It was probably fairly common practice for medical practitioners, particularly from Egypt and Babylon, to be hired out to foreign courts. Niqmaddu II, king of Ugarit, wrote to Akhenaten with a request for a doctor, since allegedly—and amazingly for this wealthy and sophisticated client kingdom—he had no medical practitioner of his own.[16] Niqmaddu was apparently seeking a permanent medical appointee for his kingdom. But generally doctors were sent on a temporary basis to a foreign land. The main purpose in sending them may have been to treat a specific illness, as in the case of the doctor sent by Ramesses to attend to Kurunta. But they may also have provided a general consultative service during their stay, enabling members of the local healing profession to benefit from their advice and expertise. Indeed their expertise might prove so valuable that their host king was tempted to exploit his royal brother's generosity in sending them by detaining them indefinitely at his court.

Babylonian physicians at the Hittite court

We learn of two such instances from Hattusili's letter to the Babylonian king Kadashman-Enlil. Two doctors had been sent on temporary loan from Babylon to Hattusa, one during Muwatalli's reign, along with an incantation priest, the other in Hattusili's own reign. Neither the doctors nor the incantation priest had returned home. Kadashman-Enlil had protested, claiming that they were being illegally detained in Hatti. Hattusili wrote back, denying any responsibility. As far as the first pair were concerned, he blamed Muwatalli for their failure to return home, and declared that he had taken his brother to task for keeping them in Hatti: 'When during the reign of my brother Muwatalli they received an incantation priest and a doctor and detained them in Hatti, I argued with him, saying: "Why are you detaining them? Detaining a doctor is not right!"'[17]

So what had become of the detainees? Hattusili maintained that he had no idea of the priest's whereabouts. Nor was he particularly bothered. 'Perhaps he died' was the best explanation he could offer. But he did have specific news about the doctor. He was alive and doing very well, he assured his royal brother. 'In fact he's the owner of a fine household here, and is married to a woman who is a relative of mine.' Then he added, somewhat disingenuously: 'If he says: "I want to return to my own country," he shall return to his country. Would I have detained Dr. Raba-sha-Marduk?'[18] The implication is clear. The Babylonian was not being held against his will in Hatti, but had been offered a substantial inducement to stay there—a fine mansion and marriage to a member of the Hittite royal family! Of course the decision as to whether or not he returned home was, strictly, not his to make. There can be no doubt that in keeping him in Hatti, with or without his consent, Hattusili as well as his brother Muwatalli had simply ignored the terms by which their royal brother in Babylon had lent his medical experts to the Hittite court.[19]

It is somewhat surprising, then, that at Hattusili's request Kadashman-Enlil agreed to send to Hattusa yet another doctor—on the clear understanding that he

was only on temporary loan. And Hattusili may have genuinely intended to send him back. But any such good intentions were frustrated when the doctor had the misfortune to die in his host's kingdom. Given the protests from Babylon on the previous occasion when a doctor was sent and not returned, his death must have been acutely embarrassing to Hattusili—at a time when he was extremely anxious to secure his Babylonian brother's goodwill. He first tried to assure Kadashman-Enlil that there had been no hostility towards the doctor. Quite the contrary: 'When they received the doctor, he accomplished many good things.'[20] And when he had taken ill, everything possible was done for him—to no avail: 'When he became ill, I spared no effort on his behalf. I performed many extispicies for him, but when his time…came, he died.' Hattusili had sent the doctor's own servants to Babylon along with his messenger to verify the truth of all this. As a further indication of the regard in which the doctor was held, Hattusili said that he was also sending back to Babylon, in the care of the dead man's servants, all the gifts which he had received from his Hittite host. And just in case the servants should take it into their heads to make off with the gifts, Hattusili recorded them in his letter:

> Let my brother pay special attention to the chariot…, the horses,the refined silver, and the linen which I gave to the physician. Theyare written down, and I have sent the tablet to my brother so thatmy brother can hear it.

So Hattusili went to some lengths to absolve himself of any responsibility for the doctor's death. Nonetheless, he remained sufficiently unabashed by this unfortunate episode to make another request of his royal brother—in this same letter. He now asked Kadashman-Enlil to send him a sculptor, to carve statues for the royal family quarters.[21] The sculptor would be sent home promptly, Kadashman-Enlil was assured, once his commission was finished. In the light of recent events this assurance might well have met with some scepticism in the Babylonian court—despite Hattusili's reminder that he had in fact returned to Babylon, safe and sound, a sculptor borrowed on a previous occasion from Kadashman-Enlil's father. Whether in fact Kadashman-Enlil entrusted any more of his skilled professionals to his royal brother's safe keeping remains unknown. But, on this occasion at least, we should not be too surprised if Hattusili was obliged to look elsewhere for his sculptor.

Notes

1 *ÄHK* 75:178–81. The letter is trans. by Beckman (1996:131–2).
2 *KUB* XIX 5 (*CTH* 191) and *KBo* XIX 79.
3 Lines 5–6 of the above. For a translation of the surviving portions of the text, see Houwink ten Cate (1983–4:39–40).
4 This is the the Egyptian name for Massanauzzi.
5 *ÄHK* 75 obv. 16-rev. 13:178–9.

6 He was one of the signatories to the treaty inscribed on the bronze tablet between Tudhaliya and his cousin Kurunta. The text of the treaty is edited by Otten (1988). For a recent English translation, see Hoffner (2000).
7 This information is provided by *KUB* XXII 13 (*CTH* 211.4), a text recording offences committed by the Seha River Land and dating to the reign of Tudhaliya IV.
8 *0dyssey*4. 231–2.
9 Herodotos 3.1.
10 *ÄHK* 2 rev. 2–9’:18–19.
11 *ÄHK* 30 obv. 12–14’:80–1.
12 *ÄHK* 45 rev. [19–20’]:114–15.
13 *ÄHK* 46 rev. 12–13’:122–3.
14 *ÄHK* 71 obv. 12’—rev. 12:170–1. This is one of two parallel letters referring to Kurunta’s illness; the other is *ÄHK* 72:170–3. Further on these letters, see Edel (1976:46–50, 82–91), van den Hout (1995:91–4). On the dating of the letters to the period between the 42nd and 56th year of Ramesses’ reign (i.e. 1237–23), see Edel (1976:20, 29–30). It is just possible, but unlikely, that Hattusili still occupied the Hittite throne when the letters were written.
15 Archives royales de Mari, 4:65, trans. Oppenheim (1967:108, no. 51).
16 *EA* 49:24–5. Zaccagnini (1987:60) doubts the truth of this, noting that Niqmaddu’s request also included an order for two black servants (‘attendants from Kush'). In Zaccagnini’s opinion, the purpose of the request was simply to enable the Ugaritic king to show off foreign peoples as interesting rarities at his court.
17 *KBo* I 10 and *KUB* III 72, rev. 42 ff., after Beckman (1996:137).
18 Op. cit., after Beckman.
19 Cf. Zaccagnini (1987:59–60).
20 This and the following passages cited in this paragraph are from rev. 34–41 of Hattusili’s letter, and are adapted from Beckman’s translation (1996:136).
21 Rev. 58–61.

III

HISTORICAL EPISODES



Map 2: The Syrian principalities (fourteenth century)

8
THE SYRIAN PRINCIPALITIES[1]

The general picture

'Syria lies at the crossroads of the Near East between Mesopotamia in the east, Anatolia in the north and Egypt in the south.' Thus Professor Goetze began his account of the struggle for the domination of Syria in the fourteenth century.[2] 'Both Mesopotamia and Anatolia are lacking in indispensable raw materials,' he continued, 'which they must acquire by trade. For them, then, Syria means access to world trade.' Syria had ports where international merchandise was received and exchanged. And through Syria passed the routes which provided the links between all the great powers of the age. There were obviously important practical incentives for a great power to establish, by military force if need be, a significant presence in the Syrian region.[3] Regular access to international trade was one of these. But military successes in the region were also important for their own sake—for the prestige they brought to those who achieved them. The ideology of kingship required a Great King to demonstrate his prowess in the field of battle. Syria provided a most appropriate arena for such a demonstration. To be a 'Smiter of Asiatics' was the proud boast of more than one pharaoh. To lead an army in triumph through Syria all the way to the Euphrates ranked as the greatest achievement of the Hittite king Hattusili I—an achievement which put him in the same league as the legendary King Sargon.

Almost inevitably, then, Great Kingship in the Late Bronze Age world entailed the capacity to impose authority over the Syrian region, or at least a substantial part of it. Syria served repeatedly as a theatre of conflict between the kingdoms of Hatti and Aleppo in the course of the campaigns launched by Hattusili I across the Taurus. Tuthmosis I and Tuthmosis III conducted a number of campaigns throughout Syria, carving their way by military conquest to the banks of the Euphrates. Mursili I destroyed Aleppo, and then led his victorious troops across Syria to their ultimate objective—the sack of Babylon. Mitannian kings were quick to exploit Hatti's decline after the assassination of Mursili, and Egypt's southward shrinkage of its territorial interests, by seizing upon the principalities of northern Syria and absorbing them within their own rapidly expanding

empire. But, like that of its predecessors, Mitanni's pre-eminence was short-lived. With yet another change of overlords, Suppiluliuma I wrested Tushratta's Syrian possessions from him in a devastating one-season campaign which took his forces to the very heartland of Mitannian territory. Seven decades later, the rise of Egypt's nineteenth dynasty brought Hatti and Egypt on to a collision course in Syria. Twice the great powers clashed at Kadesh, in the hotly disputed, ill-defined boundary region between north and south. And by this time yet another power was looming on the horizon—for Assyria undoubtedly had interests in expanding her fledgling empire across the Euphrates westwards through Syria, perhaps all the way to the Mediterranean.

What were the consequences of all this for the native inhabitants of the region? Syria-Palestine was a mosaic of principalities, each of which lay under the immediate authority of local ruling families.[4] And for much of the Late Bronze Age each was subject to one or another foreign overlord who imposed a greater or lesser degree of control over them. The fluctuations in the fortunes of the major powers inevitably impacted upon the local kingdoms, whose allegiances at any one time were very largely dictated by events in the wider international scene. Of course, it would have been totally un realistic for any of these kingdoms to aspire to independent status, free from subjection to one or other of the Great Kings. No local ruler, no subject population could ever have seriously contemplated it. For them vassalhood was a permanent fact of life. The challenge they faced was to ensure their survival in an often hostile and constantly volatile environment. Some kingdoms managed this with considerable success, particularly those blessed or afflicted with enterprising, politically astute and often ruthless leaders who were adept at seizing upon and effectively exploiting whatever opportunities arose for bolstering their power at the expense of their neighbours and sometimes their overlords. We shall have more to say about this in the next chapter.

The local Syro-Palestinian rulers figure prominently in the Amarna archive, both as the writers of letters to the pharaoh and in letters written to the pharaoh about them. Occasionally, too, they are the addressees of corres pondence found in the archive—either copies of letters sent to them or originals which were for one reason or another never dispatched. The vassal letters are of a quite different character to the letters which the pharaohs exchanged with their foreign peers. The latter made much use of formal diplomatic terminology, and though often liberally sprinkled with complaints were primarily intended to reinforce existing bonds between two Great Kings and their families. As we have seen, much of the content of the letters is devoted to the material trappings of such bonds—gift-exchanges, marriage-alliances and the like. Rarely do the letters contain specific allusions to current political or military developments.

The vassal correspondence, on the other hand, is a rich source of informa tion on such matters, at least within the region occupied by the Syro-Palestinian principalities. Formalities in the letters are relatively minimal: 'Say to the king, My Lord, My Sun: Message of Rib-Hadda, your servant. May the Lady of Gubla

grant power to the king, My Lord. I fall at the feet of My Lord seven times and seven times.'[5] After the brief initial courtesies, the writer promptly gets down to business. There are a number of recurring themes: urgent requests to the pharaoh for military or other assistance to meet a current crisis, complaints about the activities of a predatory neighbour or of a corrupt Egyptian official,[6] reports on collusion between a treacherous subject ruler and an external enemy menacing Egypt's frontiers, assurances that the pharaoh's orders have been or will be faithfully carried out, or excuses for failing to carry them out. In these letters we have quite literally a record of history in the making, and of the aspirations, ambitions and fears of many of the participants in this history. The first-hand reports of these participants provide invaluable insights into the ruthless cutthroat world of intra- and inter-vassal state politics and rivalries—though historical reality inevitably suffers from distortion or obfuscation because of the grinding of many personal axes.

On a first reading, the letters from Egypt's Syro-Palestinian subjects present a most unedifying picture of the pharaoh's vassal rulers during the Amarna period, with their grovelling expressions of self-abasement and their constant stream of self-pitying complaints and demands. Yet many of the concerns expressed in the correspondence may have been legitimate. As we have noted, the political environment of fourteenth-century Syria was a highly unstable one. The fate of the local kingdoms depended very much on the outcome of the power-plays between the Great Kingdoms who contested control over the region. Inevitably the local rulers became caught up in the conflicts—between Egypt and Mitanni, Hatti and Mitanni, Hatti and Egypt. It was impossible to remain neutral in such conflicts. And to ally oneself with one Great King was in effect a declaration of enmity against another. A high degree of political sagacity was required in determining what course of action, what political alignments would best serve one's own interests, or indeed one's very survival.

Of course a local vassal often had very little say in the matter when one Great King swept through the subject territory of another and imposed his own authority over all that lay within his path. Yet the fortunes of the great powers constantly fluctuated, and an astute vassal in a region where the major kingdoms' spheres of influence and interest overlapped might seek to turn this to his advantage by playing off one Great King against another, sometimes threatening, albeit subtly, to switch allegiance if his current over-lord failed to respond to his demands or if he saw that his chances of survival—or increasing his power—would be enhanced by responding to overtures from a new overlord. It was a dangerous game to play, and to do so successfully required considerable skill, as well as considerable nerve, in assessing the relative strengths and weaknesses of the relevant great powers at any given time.

The threats posed by some of the vassals' own peers had also to be considered. Several of the local vassals sought to expand their own kingdoms by invading and gaining control of at least part of the territories of their neighbours. Most notorious in this respect were the rulers of Amurru, Abdi-Ashirta and his

son Aziru. Their repeated acts of aggression against their neighbours figure prominently in the letters of their victims, most notably the luckless Rib-Hadda, king of Gubla, the later Greek Byblos. Similar acts of aggression in central Palestine perpetrated by Lab'ayu, ruler of Shechem, provoked similar appeals to the pharaoh from his neighbours. But, as we shall see, both Lab'ayu and the Amurrite rulers responded to the complaints of their victims and their Egyptian overlord by emphatically reaffirming their allegiance to the Egyptian crown and declaring that the actions which had aroused the protests against them had in fact been carried out in their overlord's interests.

Such declarations could hardly have concealed from the pharaoh the true motives behind their actions. Nevertheless, they well knew that the risk of full-scale Egyptian retaliation against them was remote—provided that they maintained at least a veneer of loyalty to the pharaoh. There is no doubt that the latter sought to keep to a minimum Egypt's commitment in personnel and military resources in the Syro-Palestinian subject territories. And, particularly with the Hittite menace hovering constantly just to the north of these territories, both Amenhotep III and Akhenaten were well aware that by attempting to take punitive action against a delinquent vassal they risked driving him into the enemy camp. Nevertheless, it *was* possible to exhaust an overlord's patience, and occasionally those who indulged in the game of brinkmanship left it too late to step back from the brink.

Self-interest and self-preservation were the firm guiding principles which underlay the relationship between pharaoh and Syro-Palestinian vassal. The vassal himself could hardly be blamed for this. On the Egyptian side, there is nothing to suggest that the pharaohs' imperialistic adventures, from Tuthmosis III onwards, were anything but totally exploitative of the peoples they subjected to their rule. One might of course say the same of any empire, that no nation with imperialist ambitions has ever set out to build an empire in the interests of its subject peoples. Nevertheless, some such nations have sought to create the illusion that those upon whom they have imposed their sovereignty have benefited from it, in political, administrative, economic and cultural terms. Claims of this kind sometimes have a certain validity, at least for a limited period, when one thinks (for example) of the political and material benefits which the process of 'Romanization' conferred upon the widespread peoples forced into subjection to imperial Rome. Similar claims, not altogether without foundation, have been made in more recent times by some of the European empire-builders in relation to the far-flung territories upon which they imposed their rule.

But Egypt appears to have had no vision of conferring benefits from its imperial enterprises on anyone but itself.[7] After the Hyksos invasion, strategic considerations had determined that it must establish and maintain a significant presence in Syria-Palestine, and its network of subject states in the region provided it with the means of doing so. Sovereignty over these states guaranteed the pharaoh's status as one of the Great Kings of the age, ensured the security of the homeland's north-eastern frontiers, brought regular tribute into the pharaonic

coffers and gave the Egyptians access to a wide range of valuable natural resources. But the emphasis seems to have been on achieving for Egypt the maximum benefit from its Syrian depend encies with the minimum expenditure of resources. Though, as we have noted, there were various Egyptian administrative and military personnel stationed in various dependencies, the onus was very much on the local ruler to manage his own internal affairs and to provide from his own resources the means for defending his land.

If we can so judge from the constant stream of requests to the pharaoh, and the constant complaints that these requests went unanswered, the pharaoh apparently felt no obligation to take action unless he believed there were compelling reasons for doing so. Rather, it seems that he expected his vassal rulers to take considerable initiative in sorting out their own problems—for example when threatened or attacked by aggressive neighbours. As we have noted, no treaties between pharaoh and vassal have come to light like those which formalized the relationship between the Hittite king and his vassal rulers, treaties which clearly stipulated not only the obligations imposed upon the vassal but also those assumed by the Hittite king himself in the event that his treaty partner came under attack. If there were in fact formal agreements which spelled out an Egyptian vassal's reasonable expectations of his overlord,[8] we might conclude from the vassal correspondence that such expectations were frequently unmet. This apparently *laissez-faire* policy on the pharaoh's part lent itself to exploitation by local rulers like Abdi-Ashirta, who had no qualms about pursuing his territorial ambitions at the expense of his neighbours. It also did little to discourage the squabbles and conflicts constantly erupting among the smaller states. Indeed the pharaoh may have thought the latter was no bad thing. Perhaps it was far better that the local states should be divided among themselves—and complain about his lack of intervention—than that they should become aware of the benefits of settling their differences and joining forces against him.[9]

In any case, we may wonder whether some of the complainants do in fact protest too much. It is all too easy to be unduly influenced by their rhetoric—particularly since their complaints seem to provide yet a further instance of Akhenaten's alleged neglect of his empire because of his preoccupation with his personal god and the building of his new city. We need too to bear in mind that while Akhenaten was the recipient of most of the letters in which the complaints were made, some of them were almost certainly addressed to Amenhotep III, Akhenaten's father. Amenhotep may have suffered increasingly from ill health in his final years, and *may* have shared the throne with his son during these years, but we should remember that his record of kingship is that of an extremely able, conscientious and highly respected ruler, and that in his reign Egypt and all its dominions enjoyed a high level of stability and prosperity. Apart from this there is clear evidence, as we shall see, that the pharaoh did take action when he considered it appropriate in the Syrian region, sometimes with exemplary promptness and firmness. And clearly there were times when the pharaoh had good reason to reprimand a complaining vassal—for his failure to act on advice

and instructions already sent to him, and for referring to the pharaoh matters which fell within the vassal's own competence and responsibility.

It is important to bear these considerations in mind as we venture into the politically and militarily turbulent world of Late Bronze Age Syria—Palestine. Within this world we shall be following in particular, in the next chapter, the fortunes of what became for a time the most powerful of all the Syrian vassal states, the kingdom of Amurru, and its interactions both with other members of the vassal complex and with the powers which lay beyond it. But before we proceed to this, it will be useful to do some scene-setting, to survey briefly the most important Syro-Palestinian principalities and their rulers who figure in the Amarna vassal letters as well as in other contemporary and near-contemporary correspondence. For this purpose, we shall group the principalities into four main categories: those along the southern coast, those along the northern coast, the inland principalities of Palestine and southern Syria, and the inland principalities of northern Syria.

The individual principalities

Principalities along the southern coast[10]

Gubla

Gubla (Greek Byblos) was a kingdom located on the Levantine coast to the north of Beirut. From his capital in the actual city of Gubla, the local ruler Rib-Hadda held sway over a number of small coastal towns, including Batruna, Shigata, Ammiya and Bitarha. His letters to Akhenaten constitute the most voluminous body of correspondence exchanged between vassal and overlord in the Amarna archive. For the most part the letters deal with the aggression and depredations of Abdi-Ashirta and his son Aziru, successive rulers of Gubla's northern neighbour Amurru. In the next chapter we shall be discussing in some detail the information which these letters provide.

Beirut

Beirut (Biruta in the Amarna letters) was Gubla's southern neighbour on the Levantine coast. The Amarna archive contains several letters addressed by its ruler Ammunira to Akhenaten.[11] Rib-Hadda formed an alliance with Ammunira in an attempt to counter Amurrite aggression, and after losing power in a coup sought refuge with him while vainly awaiting support from Egypt in his bid to regain his throne.

Sidon and Tyre

Further south along the Levantine coast lay the cities of Sidon (Siduna) and Tyre (Surru). To these cities too Rib-Hadda appealed for support against Amurrite aggression. Tyre's ruler at this time was a man called Abi-Milku. He provided the pharaoh with regular intelligence information on political and military activities within his region. The letters he wrote to Akhenaten[12] are a valuable source of information on these activities, as well as on the constantly festering squabbles between the pharaoh's Syro-Palestinian vassals. The letters are full of complaints about Sidon's ruler Zimredda, whom Abi-Milku accused of aggression against his own city and of collaborating with the pharaoh's enemies, most notably Aziru. Formerly a loyal Egyptian vassal, Zimredda was accused by Abi-Milku of providing Aziru with a valuable intelligence service.[13] He had, moreover, set his sights on the capture of Tyre, presumably acting as the agent of Aziru,[14] and had also combined his land and sea forces with those of the island of Arwada (biblical Arvad) for this purpose.[15]

Principalities along the northern coast

Ugarit

Covering an area some 2,000 square kilometres in extent, Ugarit was one of the largest and most prosperous of the Syrian principalities.[16] Its fertile steppes and plains, its mild temperatures and plentiful rains ensured an abundance of agricultural produce, including wine, oil, grain crops and flax, and a wide range of linen and woollen goods. It was noted for its metallurgical centres, where the arts of the bronzesmiths and goldsmiths flourished. Its royal capital, administering a land dotted with numerous towns and villages, lay close to one of its excellent harbours located along a 50-km long coastline. Here were located some of the most important international trading emporia, with ships from ports throughout the eastern Mediterranean world discharging their cargoes and taking on fresh consignments of goods brought by overland caravans from embarkation points throughout Syria, Anatolia and Mesopotamia. Stands of cedar, oak and cypress cut from Ugarit's thickly wooded mountains provided high-quality timber well in excess of local needs and in high demand on international markets. The mountain lands too provided excellent pasture for a thriving cattle industry. And wheat, olives and vines were cultivated in abundance on the fertile coastal plains.

Ugarit's wealth, natural resources and strategically important location—politically as well as commercially—made it a land eagerly courted by the major powers of the day. It had managed to remain independent of any of these powers prior to the Amarna period, while apparently enjoying warm relations with Mitanni. But then, as all-out war between Mitanni and Hatti became imminent, we find the Ugaritic king Ammishtamru I declaring his allegiance to the

pharaoh. The letter in which he did so, *EA* 45, addressed either to Amenhotep III or Akhenaten in his first years, is in fact the earliest document we have from Ugarit. Several other letters may also contain protestations of loyalty by Ammishtamru to the pharaoh.[17] No doubt the Ugaritic king saw an alliance with, if not actual voluntary submission to, Egypt as politically the most sensible move to make if he was to avoid becoming embroiled in the forthcoming Hatti-Mitanni conflict. To attempt to remain neutral would have been highly dangerous, particularly given the great attractions, strategic and material, which his country held for an invader. Yet to declare support for either Mitanni or Hatti would inevitably expose him to attack by the other. Egypt, on the other hand, was an ally of Mitanni, but it must have been well known that Suppiluliuma was anxious to cultivate friendly relations with Egypt—clearly with the intention of keeping it out of the conflict. It was most unlikely that Suppiluliuma would provoke Egypt by attacking one of its allies or subjects. Under these circumstances, an alliance with Egypt offered Ugarit the best chance of avoiding being caught up in the war between Hatti and Mitanni. Understandably its king Ammishtamru rejected any attempts made by Suppiluliuma to win him over to the Hittite side. But shortly afterwards Ammishtamru died, and Suppiluliuma renewed his suit, to his son and successor Niqmaddu II. This time he was successful. Under Niqmaddu, Ugarit became an ally of Hatti.[18]

Amurru

The land of Amurru lay south of Ugarit between the Orontes river and the coast. To its south lay the kingdom of Gubla. By the time of the Amarna correspondence Amurru had come under the sway of Abdi-Ashirta. We shall be devoting the next chapter to Amurru’s role in the history of the Amarna period, first under the rule of Abdi-Ashirta and subsequently under that of his son Aziru. The letters by, to and about Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru provide a most penetrating insight into the politics, ambitions, betrayals, conspiracies and shifting allegiances so characteristic of local politics and military adventures in Late Bronze Age Syria—Palestine.

Inland principalities of Palestine and southern Syria

Shechem

Shechem (Shakmu) was a prosperous and powerful kingdom in central Palestine, lying in a rich and fertile region west of the Jordan Valley, some 70 kilometres north of Jerusalem.[19] During the Amarna period Shechem became the centre of a small empire. Its ruler Lab’ayu achieved this status for it by invading and conquering the territories of his neighbours on the northern and western borders of the kingdom. His aggressive activities were similar to those of Abdi-Ashirta.

Like Abdi-Ashirta, Lab'ayu unreservedly acknowledged Egyptian overlordship, reaffirming his loyalty to the pharaoh in the most effusive terms when his overlord denounced him for his actions against the crown and its subjects.[20] Also like Abdi-Ashirta, his career of aggression came to an abrupt end when the pharaoh's patience with him finally ran out and he was captured by the pharaoh's men or agents acting on his behalf, and probably put to death.

Upil Apina

Upil Apina (the area south of the plain of Homs around and including Damascus) marked the southern limit of Suppiluliuma's one-year Syrian campaign. It lay in the border region of Egyptian territory and was probably tacitly conceded to Egypt some time after Suppiluliuma's conquest of it. It was subsequently reconquered by the Hittites in the aftermath of the battle of Kadesh, and for a time was assigned by the Hittite king Muwatalli to his brother Hattusili (later Hattusili III). During the Amarna period its ruler Biryawaza became embroiled in squabbles with his neighbours, particularly, it seems, with his northern neighbour Aitakkama, ruler of Kadesh, while the latter was still an Egyptian vassal. Both vassals had laid complaints about the other before the pharaoh. Biryawaza was accused of blatant aggression against Aitakkama, of seizing his entire paternal estate and burning his cities.[21] Aitakkama further accused him of collaborating with the lawless bands of Habiru,[22] with the consequent loss of the pharaoh's cities to them—though Biryawaza himself claimed that the Habiru were amongst his allies in the pharaoh's service.[23]

It was not merely Biryawaza's neighbours who laid complaints against him. He was also the subject of a protest to the pharaoh from the Babylonian king Burnaburiash, alleging that he had robbed the caravan of Salmu, one of Burnaburiash's own envoys, while it was en route to the pharaoh's court.[24] Despite Biryawaza's own protestations of loyalty to his Egyptian overlord ('My Lord is the Sun in the sky, and like the coming forth of the words from the Sun in the sky your servants await the coming forth of the words from the mouth of Their Lord'[25]) and his claim that he was himself a victim of aggression by his overlord's enemies, there can be little doubt that he was one of the least trustworthy of the pharaoh's subjects and a major cause of the chronic instability amongst Egypt's inland vassal states.

Inland principalities of northern Syria

Carchemish

Carchemish, on the west bank of the Euphrates, was the last Mitannian stronghold to be conquered by Suppiluliuma. Its capture marked the final major military operation in the Hittite destruction of the Mitannian empire. Henceforth

it was made into a viceregal kingdom ruled by one of the Hittite Great King's sons. The prince Sharri-Kushuh (formerly Piyassili), son of Suppiluliuma, was the first appointee to the viceregal post.

Aleppo

The kingdom of Aleppo, much reduced from what it had been in the days when it dominated the whole of northern Syria, was another of the Mitannian subject states that fell to Suppiluliuma. Here too Suppiluliuma departed from the usual Hittite practice of appointing or reappointing a local ruler to the throne, by converting Aleppo into another viceregal kingdom, under his son Telipinu. Between them the viceroys at Carchemish and Aleppo exercised over Hatti's Syrian subject territories virtually all the powers—political, administrative, religious and judicial—of the Great King himself.

Ashtata and Emar

South of Carchemish, and west of what is sometimes referred to as the 'big bend' in the Euphrates, lay the kingdom of Ashtata. Its territory was placed largely or wholly under the jurisdiction of Carchemish when the latter was established as a viceregal kingdom. In the reign of Suppiluliuma's son Mursili II, a new city of Emar was completed within the region of Ashtata, under Hittite direction and perhaps close to, though apparently quite distinct from, an earlier settlement of that name referred to in the Mari archives.[26] We shall discuss in Chapter 10 some recently discovered correspondence which passed between a priest at Emar and the Hittite king.

Mukish

Mukish lay to the north of Ugarit. It was the first Syrian state through which troops and merchants and diplomatic missions passed when travelling along a route from Anatolia into Syria via the Cilician Gates. Formerly part of the kingdom of Aleppo, it came under Mitannian control after the destruction of the kingdom by Mursili I, and was one of the territories assigned by the Mitannian king Parattarna to his vassal Idrimi. It was conquered by Suppiluliuma during his one-year Syrian campaign. However, it attempted to break away from Hittite overlordship by joining an anti-Hittite coalition of several northern states, which included Niya and the Nuhasse Lands. The rebellion was crushed by a Hittite expeditionary force, and substantial portions of Mukish's and Niya's territory were handed over to the Ugaritic king Niqmaddu II, who had recently allied himself with Hatti and refused to join the rebel alliance.

Niya

Niya (Nii) was another of the northern Syrian states that fell to Suppiluliuma during his one-year Syrian campaign. As we have noted, in the aftermath of this campaign Suppiluliuma transferred much of Niya's territory to Ugarit. The king of what remained of it on the east bank of the Orontes was subject to Egyptian overlordship during the Amarna period.[27] His kingdom too fell victim to the depredations of Aziru, as reported to the pharaoh by the citizens of Tunip.[28]

Nuhasse Lands

To the south of Niya lay the Nuhasse Lands, situated in a region between the Euphrates river in the east and the Orontes in the west. They were apparently made up of several small principalities or kingdoms. Each had its own ruler, though together the Nuhasse kings probably formed some kind of confederation in which one of their number served as a *primus inter pares*. Nuhasse had originally been allied with or subject to Mitanni. But in preparation for his one-year Syrian campaign Suppiluliuma had succeeded in concluding an alliance with one of its kings, Sharrupshi. The Mitannian king Tushratta responded by invading his land. Sharrupshi appealed to Suppiluliuma for assistance. Unfortunately for Sharrupshi, before the promised support materialized members of his family took matters into their own hands by assassinating him and returning his kingdom to its Mitannian allegiance under a new king, Addu-nirari. Suppiluliuma's preoccupation with his conquest of other Mitannian territories left him no time to deal with Nuhasse until after his sack of the Mitannian capital Washshuganni. Returning westwards across the Euphrates, Suppiluliuma invaded Nuhasse, unseated Sharrupshi's recently installed successor, transported the entire royal family back to Hatti and firmly established Hittite control over the entire Nuhasse region.[29]

Qatna

Qatna lay east of the Orontes river, some 40 kilometres to the north-east of Kadesh. Formerly subject to Mitanni, it was another of the Syrian states which fell to the Hittite king Suppiluliuma during the course of his one-year Syrian campaign. During the Amarna period it was ruled by a certain Akizzi, who had declared allegiance to the pharaoh. The Amarna archive contains several letters written by him to Akhenaten.[30] They complain of hostile activity against his land by the Amurrite Aziru, and more particularly by Aitakkama, ruler of Kadesh. The latter, with Hittite backing, had attacked Qatna with the object of forcing it to rejoin the Hittite fold.

Tunip

Formerly an ally or subject of the kingdom of Aleppo, the city of Tunip on the west bank of the Orontes had become subject to Egyptian overlordship during the campaigns of Tuthmosis III. As recorded in Tuthmosis' seventeenth campaign, Tunip along with Kadesh subsequently rebelled against Egyptian rule, almost certainly with Mitannian support. Nevertheless it remained under Egyptian control, and became by the Amarna period one of Egypt's three major strongholds in the northernmost part of the pharaoh's subject territories. Left leaderless by the death of their king, Aki-Teshub, the citizens of Tunip wrote to Akhenaten requesting that he return to them Aki-Teshub's son, who had been taken to Egypt for 're-education'.[31] They also expressed concern that their city would fall victim to Aziru, a fate but recently suffered by the city of Sumur. We shall have more to say about Sumur in the next chapter.

Kadesh

Kadesh[32] (mod. Tell Nebi Mend) on the Orontes was situated in what might be regarded as a kind of frontier zone between northern and southern Syria. It figured frequently in clashes between the major powers of the age. Appearing first in the records as an ally of Mitanni, it had, along with Megiddo, opposed and been defeated by the pharaoh Tuthmosis III during his first Asiatic campaign, and in a subsequent campaign had been incorporated into Egyptian subject territory. Its status as an Egyptian vassal was confirmed in the accord reached between Mitanni and Egypt during Tuthmosis IV's reign. True to his policy of maintaining peace with Egypt during his campaigns against Mitanni, Suppiluliuma intended to leave Kadesh unmolested. But pro-Mitannian interests in the city still remained strong, and prompted by these Shuttarna, king of Kadesh, launched an unprovoked attack on Suppiluliuma's troops as they passed through the region. Suppiluliuma responded by attacking and conquering the city and conveying its king and leading citizens back to Hatti.

The king's son Aitakkama was included among the prisoners. But Suppiluliuma subsequently allowed him to return to the city and occupy his father's throne. Initially Aitakkama seems to have made some show of allegiance to the pharaoh,[33] but during the course of the Amarna correspondence it became quite clear that he and his kingdom were now firmly in the Hittite camp. As far as we know, Egypt made no response to or protest about the loss of Kadesh to the Hittites, at least during Akhenaten's reign. But the question of which Great King could claim sovereignty over it was long to remain a highly contentious one. As we shall see, Tutankhamun was the first pharaoh after Akhenaten to put the issue to the test, with disastrous consequences. In the meantime, Aitakkama made the most of his opportunities as Suppiluliuma's protégé by allying himself with other local rulers, notably Aziru, and expanding his own kingdom at the expense of the pharaoh's loyal vassals in the region.

Notes

1 For a comprehensive, well-documented treatment of Syria and the control exercised over it by the Great Kingdoms in the Late Bronze Age, see Klengel (1992: 100–80).
2 Goetze (1975:1).
3 The term 'Syria' is used here as elsewhere in this book in the very broad sense of the region lying between the Euphrates river and the Mediterranean Sea. This usage, which goes back to antiquity, thus covers a much more extensive region than modern Syria.
4 It should be noted that the term 'principality' as used here is one of variable extension. In some cases it applies essentially to a single city and its immediate surrounding territory. In other cases it covers a broader region, which often includes a number of smaller towns and villages and farming estates.
5 *EA* 132:1–7, trans. Moran.
6 Complaints by vassals against Egyptian officials appear, e.g., in *EA* 234, 270, 285, 289, 292.
7 In general on the relationship between Egypt and her Syro-Palestinian vassals, see James (2000).
8 We noted in Chapter 2 that there is no clear evidence for such agreements.
9 Weinstein (1998:228) suggests that it was the economic benefits that Egypt derived from the region that caused a series of pharaohs to show a remarkable tolerance for disorder among the polities of the northern empire.
10 See also Klengel (1992:175–8).
11 *EA* 141–3.
12 *EA* 146–55.
13 *EA* 147:66–71.
14 In *EA* 151:64–8, Abi-Milku reported that Zimredda had assembled troops and ships from the cities of Aziru against him.
15 *EA* 149:54–63.
16 For a more detailed treatment of Late Bronze Age Ugarit, see Klengel (1992: 130–51).
17 *EA* 46–8; See Moran (1992:118, n. 1).
18 See Bryce (1998:177–9).
19 Also the seat of a local king, appointed by the pharaoh, who received envoys from Egypt and sent gifts and tribute to the pharaoh.
20 See *EA* 254–6.
21 *EA* 189: obv. 12.
22 *EA* 189: rev. 9–12. For the Habiru, see Chapter 9
23 *EA* 195:24–32.
24 *EA* 7:73–5.
25 *EA* 195:16–23, trans. Moran. *EA* 194 and 196 contain similar protestations of loyalty.
26 The earlier settlement has yet to be discovered.
27 *EA* 53:42.
28 *EA* 59:25–8.

29 For a more detailed treatment of Niya and the Nuhasse Lands, see Klengel (1992: 151–6).
30 *EA* 53–5.
31 *EA* 59:13–20.
32 Its history is treated at some length by Klengel (1992:157–60).
33 *EA* 189. His initial nominal allegiance to the pharaoh perhaps had the agreement of the Hittites, who, Klengel (1992:158) suggests, did not want to offend the Egyptian overlords of Kadesh. But where *EA* 189 belongs in the chronology of events of the Amarna period remains uncertain. It is possible that the letter was written by Aitakkama *prior* to the Hittite attack on Kadesh, and the removal of the royal family from it, if we accept the suggestion that Aitakkama already at that time ruled as co-regent with his father (cf. Klengel (1992:157)).

9
THE WARLORDS OF AMURRU[1]

In texts of the third and early second millennium, the name ‘Amurru’ was applied to a large expanse of territory encompassing much of modern Syria. Subsequently the name was used in a more restricted sense, covering in broad terms the territory which extended between the Orontes river and the central Levantine coast. During the course of Tuthmosis III’s Syrian campaigns it was incorporated into Egypt’s Syrian empire, but only in a very nominal sense. Amurru was a wild and dangerous land, one through which merchants, envoys or travellers of any description passed at their peril. At any time they were liable to be attacked, robbed and murdered by lawless groups of semi-nomads who infested the mountains and forests of the region and posed a severe threat, not only to those brave or foolish enough to pass through the land without adequate escort, but also to the more settled urban communities within their striking range. Their ability to swoop upon their prey without warning and disappear without trace to their forest lairs and mountain fastnesses before any effective action could be taken against them made the name Habiru, by which they were known, one of the most feared in the entire Syrian region.

Initially made up of bands of fugitives and social and political outcasts, the Habiru’s numbers were constantly swelled by criminals on the run, marauding mercenaries, and adventurers who relished the excitement and prospects of rich plunder which a life with the roving bands of northern Canaanites offered. Whole communities were persuaded or forced to join their ranks—the only alternative to being slaughtered or compelled to live in constant terror and impoverishment as their townships and crops were repeatedly plundered and destroyed. ‘Your Majesty should know that the enmity against me is very great,’ wrote Zimredda, ruler of Sidon, to the pharaoh. ‘All the cities which the king has placed under me have joined the Habiru.’[2]

It was bad enough when the Habiru carried out their attacks in separate, unco-ordinated groups. Even then they could be severely disruptive of order and stability amongst the pharaoh’s Syrian dependencies. That is made clear repeatedly in the vassal correspondence. But what if this force were effectively harnessed, if these groups were united under a single leader?

The career of Abdi-Ashirta

In the reign of Amenhotep III, one such leader did emerge—a man called Abdi-Ashirta,[3] who arose, almost certainly, from the ranks of the local tribal chieftains. What distinguished him from his peers was a vision, ambitious and wide-ranging in its scope, of a country united beneath his sway, a vision which foresaw almost limitless possibilities for exploiting, through united action, the peoples and the resources within and beyond the regions where the Habiru customarily roamed. But vision on it own was not enough. Abdi-Ashirta also had the skills and the determination to put it into effect. To do so he needed not merely the support of his fellow chieftains and the motley assortment of brigands and cutthroats whom they led, but their continuing, unquestioning acceptance of him as their leader. Achievement of this could have been no mean feat. By their very nature the Habiru were of a highly anarchic disposition and would not readily have accepted the discipline and loss of independence which submission to Abdi-Ashirta's leadership required. The incentives offered to them, in terms of power and material rewards, must have been very great indeed. For there is no doubt that the Habiru bands of northern Canaan constituted the main element amongst the forces which Abdi-Ashirta used to build his power in Amurru and then launch attacks upon his neighbours.

But success in such enterprises required a major change of strategy. In the past the Habiru's most effective weapon had been their elusiveness, their hit-and-run raids in small groups, their ability to disappear swiftly without trace. It was virtually impossible for a regular army to deal effectively with such an enemy, to run him to ground—as the Hittites learned from their many encounters with the Kaskan peoples. But once these small groups combined into larger units and engaged in more conventional military operations they were much more vulnerable to conventional armies. Abdi-Ashirta's forces had grown to the point where they could carry out successful attacks on major cities, even when these cities were defended by resident garrisons. But they would scarcely have been a match for a large, highly trained, well-equipped expeditionary force ordered into action against them by the pharaoh.

Abdi-Ashirta had no wish to provoke conflict with Egypt. Yet his hold over his Habiru troops could only be maintained by keeping constantly before them the prospect of ever greater rewards—and *that* could only be achieved by repeated attacks on his neighbours, subjects of the pharaoh. On the surface these two considerations might have seemed incompatible. Certainly they required a delicate balancing act on the part of the Amurrite leader. The challenge he faced was to continue to indulge his own ambitions —and his troops' lust for conquest and plunder—under the guise of acting as the pharaoh's self-appointed champion in the region. Any enterprises he undertook, he did so as the pharaoh's agent. Any opposition he encountered was due to treachery or disloyalty on the part of the pharaoh's officials or local subjects. At least that was the message he constantly sought to convey in his letters to the Egyptian court.

Sumur, a stronghold near Egypt's northern frontier,[4] provided a test case. After seizing the cities of Ardata and Irqata in southern Amurru, Abdi-Ashirta set his sights on this strategically important northern fortress. As luck would have it, Sumur's resident Egyptian commissioner, Pahhanate, was absent at the time. This gave Abdi-Ashirta the opportunity he needed. He led his Habiru troops against the city and occupied it with little apparent resistance. In fact luck probably had very little to do with his move against the city. He may quite intentionally have timed this move to coincide with Pahhanate's absence, thus avoiding a direct confrontation with the pharaoh's chief representative in the district. Even so, the pharaoh could hardly fail to respond to this blatant act of aggression.

News of Sumur's fall spread quickly. What was the pharaoh going to do about it? Where were the forces to recapture it? Greatly concerned, Abdi-Ashirta's southern neighbour Rib-Hadda, king of Gubla, wrote to the royal Egyptian official Haya: 'Why did you hold back and not speak to the king?,' he demanded. 'He would then have sent archers to capture Sumur'.[5] (Abdi-Ashirta had committed the further outrage, so Rib-Hadda informed the pharaoh in another letter, of actually sleeping in the royal bedchamber in the palace and opening up the royal treasure house!)[6] The Egyptian commissioner Pahhanate was no less concerned at this alarming turn of events. He wrote angrily to Abdi-Ashirta, denouncing him as an enemy of Egypt.[7] Abdi-Ashirta promptly wrote back denying Pahhanate's allegations. Far from being Egypt's enemy, he declared, he had been defending Egypt's interests! He had occupied Sumur only when it had been left defenceless, the palace all but abandoned and under threat of destruction from the city of Sehlal. Even then, he said, he had taken action only in response to an appeal from the four officials who had remained in the palace, loyal to the end.

Abdi-Ashirta wrote also to the pharaoh, personally assuring him of his allegiance, and proclaiming himself- on his overlord's behalf- the defender, not just of Sumur and nearby Ullassa, but of the whole land of Amurru. In a remarkable manipulation of the facts, he claimed that he had taken on this role at the request of Pahhanate, the king's own official, or at least with his approval:

> Look, there is Pahhanate, my commissioner. May the king, the Sun, ask him if I do not guard Sumur and Ullassa. When my commissioner is on a mission of the king, the Sun, then I am the one who guards the harvest of the grain of Sumur and all the lands for the king, My Sun, My Lord.[8]

Abdi-Ashirta was thus setting himself up as a kind of regional watchdog. Nor, indeed, was it only against the pharaoh's own allegedly disloyal subjects that his services were available. As his son Aziru was later to do on several occasions, Abdi-Ashirta raised the bogey of foreign intervention. 'All the rulers subject to the king of the Hurrians seek to wrest your lands from you,' he declared (with much rhetorical exaggeration) in the same letter. But the pharaoh had no need to

worry: '*I'm* guarding your lands for you', he assured him. Egypt's fear of foreign aggression in Syria could readily be exploited. It provided the lords of Amurru with a useful card to play from time to time. And they did so with considerable success.

Abdi-Ashirta was allowed to continue his occupancy of Sumur—thus giving him a valuable base for his future operations. It may indeed have become his headquarters.[9] Located as it was near the northern periphery of Egyptian subject territory, its position had a number of distinct advantages for its *de facto* ruler. Its distance from Egypt proper must have increased his bargaining power with an overlord reluctant to commit homeland forces to lengthy campaigns in the more remote parts of his kingdom. And if troops were in fact sent from Egypt to retake the city, as urged by the ruler of Gubla, Abdi-Ashirta would have had considerable advance warning of their approach. Sumur's proximity to Mitannian and (subsequently) Hittite subject territory could also be turned to his advantage. Promises to guard the northern frontier against foreign incursions could easily be replaced by threats to defect to the enemy, with the transfer to the enemy of a substantial chunk of Egyptian subject territory, if the pharaoh were unwise enough to force a showdown with this 'protector of his interests' in the north.

Indeed it has been argued that Abdi-Ashirta did in fact attempt to shift his allegiance to Mitanni. This on the basis of a campaign which (according to Rib-Hadda) the Mitannian king Tushratta conducted to Sumur, with the intention of proceeding further down the coast to Gubla.[10] According to Professor Liverani's interpretation of the relevant passage, Tushratta decided that the country was too large and too poor to have any appeal for him, and he was content to leave it to Egyptian overlordship.[11] Unfortunately the vagueness of the letter's wording makes it impossible to tell what historical or political significance is to be attached to the alleged Mitannian campaign, and there are good reasons for doubting whether Tushratta at this time would have even contemplated an expansion of Mitannian subject territory at Egypt's expense, or was urged to do so by Abdi-Ashirta. Rather, Tushratta's visit to Sumur—if in fact he did make such a visit—is generally seen as a means used by Tushratta of demonstrating the solidarity of the Mitannian—Egyptian alliance, presumably in the face of dangers posed by an aggressive Hatti to both kingdoms. It seems almost inconceivable that Tushratta would have deliberately provoked hostilities with Egypt by campaigning in Egyptian subject territory at precisely the time he was being hard pressed in his own territory by the forces of Suppiluliuma. Singer may well be right in dismissing Rib-Hadda's report on Tushratta's campaign as no more than a figment of the ruler of Gubla's notorious polemics.[12]

In any case Abdi-Ashirta's operations in Amurru had proved outstandingly successful without the need for any outside assistance. With virtually no opposition from Egypt, and apparently no effective opposition from the pharaoh's local officials in Syria, this former tribal chieftain had captured the most important cities in the region and made himself master of it in its entirety. Coercion and intimidation, as much as overt military force, were the means he

used to achieve this. Appeals and protests streamed to the pharaoh's court from those under threat from the Amurrite, with Rib-Hadda leading the chorus. Abdi-Ashirta's Habiru bands had been unleashed on the neighbouring territories, seizing Rib-Hadda's mountain villages and reducing what was left of the land of Gubla to the brink of starvation. 'Our sons and daughters are gone, sold in the land of Yarimuta for provisions to keep us alive,' Rib-Hadda informed the pharaoh. 'For lack of a cultivator, my field is like a woman without a husband,' he continued, quoting an apparently well-known proverb.[13] Each military success, each act of devastation brought ever larger numbers over to Abdi-Ashirta's side. Those who resisted were ruthlessly cut down—in the interests of peace and unity, so Abdi-Ashirta allegedly maintained. But all who joined him were like Habiru, declared Rib-Hadda.

Other letters were written by Rib-Hadda in similar vein, all accusing Abdi-Ashirta of ruthless aggression and territorial expansion, all begging the pharaoh for military assistance, all declaring the kingdom of Gubla to be on the verge of total collapse. Its ruler represented himself as the last line of resistance against a warlord whose ultimate ambitions, the pharaoh must be warned, were those of a Great King. These ambitions would be achieved at the pharaoh's expense:

> Moreover, who is Abdi-Ashirta, the dog, that he seeks to take all the cities of the king, the Sun, for himself? Is he the king of Mitanni, or the king of the Kassites, that he seeks to take the land of the king (of Egypt) for himself?[14]

But Egypt's response to all this was muted—due more perhaps to *Realpolitik* than to indifference or negligence on the pharaoh's part. Amurru was a large and difficult territory to control, in terms of both its topography and its unruly population groups. And as we have noted, its location placed it within easy access of whichever of the great powers controlled northern Syria. Abdi-Ashirta had succeeded in uniting the country beneath his sway. He had done so purely on his own initiative, without seeking any form of approval or endorsement or support from the pharaoh. He simply seized power in the region and presented his enterprise to the pharaoh as a *fait accompli*. But he did so in the context of unreserved acceptance of the pharaoh as his overlord. That was the crucial point. However he achieved his power—and the pharaoh can hardly have had any doubt that coercion and intimidation were involved, and that his claim to have 'liberated' Sumur (for example) from the threat of an aggressive neighbour was to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt—he could well prove a considerable asset to the Egyptian administration, as a strong and able local ruler who had declared, without qualification, that he would devote himself to the protection of Egyptian interests in his region. Little wonder that Rib-Hadda's appeals and warnings fell on deaf ears—at least at this stage of Abdi-Ashirta's career.

Of course, it was all too good to be true. Emboldened by the apparent ease of his takeover of Sumur, Abdi-Ashirta set his sights on conquests further afield. He

might have turned north against the wealthy state of Ugarit. But in spite of the prizes it offered, the conquest of Ugarit would have entailed serious risks, with no certainty of ultimate success—particularly if by this time it was already allied to Hatti. In that case, any attack upon it would certainly have brought down upon Abdi-Ashirta the full wrath of the Hittite Great King. It was best to steer clear of Ugarit.

Campaigns against his southern neighbours offered much better—and safer—prospects of success. This was precisely what Rib-Hadda feared, whose kingdom bordered Amurru to its north. Using his Habiru forces, Abdi-Ashirta engaged in a campaign of terror and intimidation against a number of cities and regions lying south of Amurru. The various city rulers were the particular targets of his campaign. While some were slaughtered by the Habiru,[15] others fell victim to their own fellow citizens, at Abdi-Ashirta's urging. Thus Rib-Hadda informed the pharaoh: 'When he had taken Shigata for himself, Abdi-Ashirta said to the men of Ammiya, "Kill your lord so that you may be like us and at peace." They were won over by his words, and they became like Habiru.'[16] We can hardly doubt that the cities which rose up against and killed their leaders and allied themselves with the Habiru did so in most cases through fear of the consequences of rejecting Abdi-Ashirta's overtures to them. Rib-Hadda declared that the rebels would quickly abandon Abdi-Ashirta—if only the pharaoh would send troops to deal with him. Even in Amurru '(the people) are not now well-disposed to Abdi-Ashirta…. Night and day they long for the (Egyptian) archers to come, and will say: "Let us join them!" All the mayors long for this action to be taken against Abdi-Ashirta.'[17]

For Rib-Hadda himself the situation became increasingly desperate. One by one the cities that lay under his control fell to Abdi-Ashirta. Soon only two cities, Batruna and his royal capital Gubla, remained to him. Finally Batruna fell,[18] and Gubla stood alone. A delegation sent by Rib-Hadda to Egypt to beg for military support returned empty handed. There was, however, a faint hope. Belatedly, it seems, the pharaoh had written to the rulers of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre with the instruction: 'Rib-Hadda will be writing to you for an auxiliary force, and all of you are to go.'[19] Surely these cities, which lay further south and were apparently beyond Abdi-Ashirta's reach, could be relied upon for support, especially with an explicit order from the pharaoh.

Tyre in particular, the southernmost of the three kingdoms, must have been seen as secure against Amurrite aggression. Indeed, as Abdi-Ashirta's forces moved ever closer to Gubla, Rib-Hadda had sent his sister and her children to Tyre as a safe haven. No doubt it was with renewed confidence, after the advice he had received from the pharaoh, that he dispatched his appeal for assistance to the rulers of Beirut, Sidon and Tyre. But the speed and effectiveness of Abdi-Ashirta's progress had been seriously underestimated. Already the three cities were in the hands of the Amurrite's supporters! Yapah-Hadda and Zimredda, the rulers of Beirut and Sidon, respectively, had capitulated to him—probably after repeated unsuccessful appeals to the pharaoh for assistance against him[20]—in

order to save their own skins.[21] Then from Tyre, a city with which Rib-Hadda had enjoyed particularly close bonds, there came chilling news. The mayor of Tyre was dead, murdered by his own citizens for apparently refusing to join forces with Abdi-Ashirta. Rib-Hadda's sister and her children shared his fate.[22] They too had been slaughtered, perhaps on Abdi-Ashirta's explicit orders, perhaps on the initiative of a terrified populace bent on appeasing a ruthless conqueror.

In the meantime Rib-Hadda's capital was suffering increasingly from the privations imposed upon it by Abdi-Ashirta's forces. For two years its grain lands had been plundered, reducing the city to famine conditions, and attacks on the city itself were now being made with increasing frequency—three times within the last year! So severe was the famine, Rib-Hadda wrote to the pharaoh, that his peasantry had been obliged to sell their household goods and even their children in order keep the kingdom from starvation.[23] It was time now for Abdi-Ashirta to make his attack upon Rib-Hadda's capital, already close to collapse.

Everything was in readiness for a final onslaught upon what remained of the kingdom of Gubla. Abdi-Ashirta sent a message to all his troops: 'Assemble in the temple of NINURTA, and then let us attack Gubla. See! No-one will save it from us!'[24] Soon the whole kingdom of Gubla would be joined to the Habiru. Abdi-Ashirta would be ruler of all. 'I am very, very fearful,' Rib-Hadda wrote to the pharaoh, 'for there is no-one to save me from them. Like a bird in a trap, so I am in Gubla!' Appeals to Egypt had been ignored: 'Why have you neglected your country? I have written like this to the palace, but you pay no attention to my words!' The pharaoh's own official Amanappa, now back in the royal court, had first-hand knowledge of the local situation. '(If you do not believe me), ask him! He knows, he has experienced the desperate situation I'm in!'

Stripped of all his cities but his capital, deprived of all local sources of support, and with his appeals to his overlord ignored, Rib-Hadda saw that his situation was well-nigh hopeless. 'Like a bird in a trap, so I am in Gubla' had become a constant refrain in his letters to the pharaoh. Even in his own city he was the victim of disloyalty and treachery. He had been abandoned by the men whom the pharaoh had assigned to him—'All the men you gave me have fled,' he informed the pharaoh—and had barely escaped with his own life. As he had done in other cases, Abdi-Ashirta sought an easy conquest of the city through the elimination of its leader by the leader's own people: 'Kill your lord and join up with the Habiru', Abdi-Ashirta had urged the men of Gubla. 'In this way,' said Rib-Hadda, 'my own people became traitors'.[25] He survived an assassination attempt: 'A man with a bronze dagger struck me nine times, but I killed him.'[26] Other attempts, however, would be made. It seemed that Rib-Hadda's days were numbered.

He could see but two possibilities. These he presented to the pharaoh by way of an ultimatum: 'Send back word to me that you have dispatched a garrison and horses, or I will abandon my city taking my loyal supporters with me. Or like the mayors of Sidon and Beirut I will make an alliance with Abdi-Ashirta!'[27] It was, apparently, the last desperate ploy of a man who had maintained his loyalty to

his overlord—while everyone else succumbed to the aggressor—until all hope was at an end. There was but one other option. If even now the pharaoh was reluctant to commit troops to saving Rib-Hadda, perhaps he could bribe the aggressor to withdraw his forces! 'Why not pay him a thousand (shekels of) silver and 100 (shekels of gold), so that he will go away from me?'[28]

When the situation seemed past all remedy, the pharaoh suddenly took action. What had caused him to do so? It was almost certainly not out of sympathy for the plight of Rib-Hadda, whose incessant appeals for assistance had' if anything' proved counterproductive. The one thing in Rib-Hadda's letters which did strike a responsive chord was the threat Abdi-Ashirta would pose to Egypt's entire network of subject territories in Syria once he had consolidated his hold over the coastal states from Sumur in the north to Tyre in the south. His capture of Gubla would fill the last remaining gap. As Singer succinctly puts it:

> Abdi-Ashirta's aggrandizement had reached a state in which almost the entire Phoenician coast had submitted to his direct or indirect control. This was beyond the limits of what the Egyptians felt they could tolerate without risking their own authority in the northern part of their Asiatic empire.[29]

In letters which he subsequently wrote to Akhenaten, Rib-Hadda referred to the action which the pharaoh's father Amenhotep III eventually took against Abdi-Ashirta:

> I sent a man to your father. When Amanappa came with a small force, I wrote to the palace that the king should send a large force. Did he not take Abdi-Ashirta prisoner along with everything belonging to him, just as I said?[30]

Abdi-Ashirta's capture by the Egyptian expeditionary force may well have brought his career to an abrupt end. In another letter probably written by Rib-Hadda to Akhenaten, we possibly have a reference to Abdi-Ashirta's death.[31] Nodetails are given. According to Moran's interpretation of the relevant words, we are simply told They have killed Abdi-Ashirta'.[32] But other interpretations of these words have been proposed, leaving Abdi-Ashirta's ultimate fate in doubt.[33] Whether he was assassinated by dissidents amongst his fellow countryman or newly acquired subjects, or executed by his Egyptian captors, either summarily or after being taken to Egypt, his death was no doubt cause for much celebration in the city of Gubla and more widely in the regions through which he had extended his sway.

Abdi-Ashirta's sons

But the respite which Rib-Hadda and his fellow rulers gained from the Amurrite menace proved to be very short-lived. While Egypt may have succeeded in

removing Abdi-Ashirta from the scene, it had no alternative regime to put in his place. To a very large extent that was due to the nature of the country over which he held sway. Its large woodland and mountain areas and its relatively small tracts of land suitable for agricultural purposes were much more conducive to a pastoral and semi-nomadic lifestyle than to a settled existence in large communities and urban centres. The overall character of Amurru was still very much that of a tribal society. And Abdi-Ashirta's role was primarily that of a tribal chieftain who had succeeded in bringing under his leadership a motley assortment of regional tribes and bands of marauders, who provided the mainstay of his power. He never referred to himself, or was addressed, as a king. His 'kingdom' lacked the formal structure of a vassal state, and the authority he wielded was purely *ad hominem*. There was certainly nothing resembling a permanent royal court, and it appears that he did not even have a permanent capital. Rather, he used different cities as his headquarters. Sumur was one of these, perhaps the most important.

As Hittite and other Near Eastern kings came to learn, it was extremely difficult to impose any form of lasting control over such regions, lacking as they did a conventional army that could be defeated in the field of battle, or a stable, permanent political and administrative structure of the kind typical of the more formally constituted vassal states. This probably goes a long way towards explaining why the pharaoh delayed so long in taking action against Abdi-Ashirta, even in the face of his blatant aggression against other Egyptian vassal states. And the likelihood is that his final removal was due to a covert action against him by the Egyptians or their agents rather than to a full-scale military operation.

But his removal did not solve the Amurru problem. For his sons quickly filled the vacuum left by their father's death, and among themselves continued to exercise control over the entire Amurrite region. The region was now in effect controlled by a family dynasty of tribal warlords. This was no comfort at all to Amurru's neighbours. And if anything the pharaoh had an even more difficult situation to deal with. A fresh stream of complaints from Rib-Hadda left him in no doubt about this. All the states that had been freed from Abdi-Ashirta's forces on his death were once more at risk. Once more, the cities and strongholds he had occupied came under threat of attack by his sons.

The addressee of at least this 'second series' of letters from Rib-Hadda must be Akhenaten, now occupying the throne of Egypt as sole ruler after the death of his father Amenhotep III. The enmity of Abdi-Ashirta's sons against me is severe,' Rib-Hadda informed him. 'They have occupied the land of Amurru and the entire country is theirs!'[34] One after the other, the liberated cities were reoccupied—Ullassa, Ardata, Wahliya, Ampi, Shigata, Arwada.[35] The sons had used their father's tactics in winning them over: persuade the local leaders to throw in their lot with them—and if they refused, incite their populations to assassinate them, overwhelm the local garrisons and open their cities' gates to the Amurrite chieftains.

For a time Sumur, one of the most important strongholds occupied by Abdi-Ashirta in the north, held out against the sons, along with its southern neighbour Irqata. Sumur had been placed once more under the control of an Egyptian commissioner after Abdi-Ashirta's death and was defended by garrison troops. Yet, with all other cities and states in the region falling or going over to Abdi-Ashirta's sons, Sumur again became dangerously vulnerable. The pharaoh wrote to Rib-Hadda instructing him to go to its assistance and to remain there until reinforcements arrived from Egypt.[36]

It appears that Rib-Hadda had in fact visited Sumur, but probably before its position had become so desperate. Now he pleaded that he could not comply with the pharaoh's command. Several reasons were given. To begin with, his own capital had to contend with renewed Amurrite aggression: 'Hostilities against me have been very severe and I have been unable to go.'[37] He had failed to obtain the support of the rulers of Sidon (Zimredda) and Beirut (Yapah-Hadda) for his relief expedition—not surprisingly, since these men had also rejected a direct appeal to them from the beleaguered commissioner in Sumur. And he was concerned that even if he did manage to get into the city he would be trapped there by enemy forces and unable to leave. That would ensure that the inhabitants of his own capital would abandon him and ally themselves with the Habiru.[38]

Food shortages were also exacerbating the situation in his capital. The Habiru bands had quickly resumed their raids on its farmlands, and attempts to bring in food supplies by ship were thwarted by a blockade imposed by the island of Arwada.[39] (For this reason too, Rib-Hadda had been unable to send his ships to Sumur.) Arwada lay *circa* 3 kilometres off the Levantine coast, just to the north of Sumur, and had joined the enemy forces.[40] What made the food problem even more acute in Rib-Hadda's capital was the sudden swelling of its population by Egyptian refugees from Ullassa, who had fled to Gubla as a possible safe haven when their own city was on the point of falling to the enemy: The Egyptians who escaped from Ullassa are now with me, but there is no grain for them to eat,' Rib-Hadda informed the pharaoh.[41] Very likely Gubla provided a haven for refugees from other cities as well. The prospect of starvation must have acted as a powerful incentive for the population of Gubla, along with those of other cities, to join the Habiru.

Sumur's position was becoming increasingly desperate. It was subjected to siege by both land and sea. Forgetting for a moment his own problems, Rib-Hadda urged the pharaoh to send a relief force to the city without delay: 'Sumur is like a bird in a trap!' he wrote, once more using one of his favourite figures of speech. 'It is under attack day and night—from the sons of Abdi-Ashirta by land, from the people of Arwada by sea!'[42] The Egyptian commissioner's appeal to the mayors of Beirut and Sidon for support had gone unanswered: Though the magnate keeps writing to them, they pay him no attention.'[43] With the end now in sight, the great majority of Sumur's garrison troops panicked and fled the city. There remained but a skeleton force of loyal supporters. But they could do little.

Once more Rib-Hadda appealed to the pharaoh: 'May the king, My Lord, heed the words of his loyal servant!' he urged. 'Send an auxiliary force with all speed to Sumur in order to guard it until the arrival of the archers of the king!'[44] The commissioner's life was in imminent danger. 'If in these circumstances you do nothing, they are certainly going to take Sumur and kill the commissioner and the auxiliary force in Sumur.'[45]

The appeal apparently went unheeded. All of Sumur's territory was lost to it but the city itself. 'Sumur is now occupied, up to its city-gate!'[46] wrote Rib-Hadda. His letter carried further grim news. The king's commissioner who had held out for so long against the enemy, in the hope that the local rulers would support him, that a relief force from Egypt would soon come, was now dead—almost certainly the victim of assassination by one of his own people. His death removed the last obstacle to Sumur's surrender. Shortly afterwards the city, or what was left of it, succumbed to its besiegers.

The career of Aziru

It is in connection with the siege and capture of Sumur that one of Abdi-Ashirta's sons, Aziru, comes to high prominence. Almost certainly the architect of the successful Sumur campaign, Aziru henceforth figures as arch-enemy in Rib-Hadda's correspondence. He had acquired high status amongst his brothers, though probably as a *primus inter pares* rather than as one to whom they were in any formal sense subservient. From now on the fortunes of Amurru and those of Aziru were closely aligned. His policies and military enterprises were similar to those pursued by his father—campaigns of conquest against his neighbours while declaring himself the pharaoh's devoted subject and the agent and protector of Egyptian interests in his region. But, even more than his father, he seems to have been anxious to gain formal recognition of his status from the pharaoh. These two policies were not mutually exclusive. There was more chance, he must have reasoned, that he would win from the pharaoh the concessions he sought by arguing from a position of strength. The pharaoh might well refuse to do business with the representative of a family with such an appalling record of treachery and aggression against Egyptian subjects—unless he could be persuaded that it would be very much in his interests to do so.

Aziru's overtures to the pharaoh and his officials stationed in or visiting Syria could have begun while he was actually making plans for his campaign against Sumur, in the hope that diplomacy rather than brute force would give him control of the city. His initial approaches to the authorities in Sumur seem to have been along these lines. As he informed the pharaoh:

> Right from the beginning, My Lord, I have sought to devote myself to the service of the king, My Lord, but the high officials of Sumur have not allowed me. Yet I am innocent of the slightest offence against the king, My

> Lord. The king, My Lord, knows who the real offenders are. I will truly comply with all that the king, My Lord, asks of me.[47]

As a token of his sincerity and good faith, he even had two of his sons accompany his messages to the pharaoh.[48] Perhaps it was only after the failure of his diplomatic initiatives that he resorted to force—though he was apparently quick to assure the pharaoh that the attack on Sumur should in no way be taken as an act of hostility against his acknowledged overlord.[49]

On the other hand, Aziru could hardly have been surprised at the hostility he encountered from Egyptian officials stationed in the Syrian territories. From several of his letters we learn of the frustration of his attempts—by Egyptian officials—to achieve recognition as the pharaoh's subject: 'I want to enter into the service of the king, the God, the Sun, My Lord, but Yanhamu has not permitted me.'[50] This and similar statements suggest that he had sought on a number of occasions to establish his credentials with the pharaoh by taking what was probably the procedurally correct step of approaching first his officials in Syria. Thus he had written to the Egyptian official Tutu in the most ingratiating terms: 'You are my father and my lord, and I am your son. The lands of Amurru are your lands, and my house is your house. Write to me all that you desire, and I will truly grant it.'[51] Initially, at least, Tutu's response may have been similar to that of Yanhamu.[52] Diplomatically speaking, Aziru's task was no easy one.

Nevertheless, in his attempts to win formal recognition from Egypt the international situation provided him with an important bargaining counter. There could be no doubt that Mitanni was well-nigh finished as an independ ent power, and that it was but a matter of time before Suppiluliuma, the king of Hatti, would become the undisputed ruler of all of northern Syria. Once he had achieved this, there would be nothing to stop his advance further south into Egyptian territory, if he so wished, but the resistance of a loyal and powerful vassal. In alerting the pharaoh to the Hittite menace, Aziru left no doubt about his own personal motives: 'If the king of Hatti takes hostile action against me, may the king, My Lord, send me…troops and chariots to support me, and I will defend the land of the king, My Lord.'[53] Aziru was not merely seeking formal recognition as a vassal ruler—and he undertook to fulfil all the obligations of vassalhood ('All that the mayors have given, I too will truly give to the king, My Lord, my God and my Sun forever.'[54])—but also military support from Egypt. Ostensibly the troops he requested were to assist with defence against possible enemy invasion. In fact they would also greatly strengthen Aziru's own personal position—first, because they would provide the most tangible acknowledgment possible of pharaonic endorsement of his position; second, because they would decrease Aziru's own dependence on the ill-disciplined and unpredictable Habiru bands who made up the bulk of his forces.

Abdi-Ashirta had sought to build a power base within the pharaoh's Syrian subject territories by uniting the semi-nomadic tribal groups in the region under his command and using them to conquer the territories of his neighbours. Aziru

sought to give legitimacy to that power base, to win the stamp of approval of a Great King for his regime, while still giving rein to the instinct for plunder and conquest which many generations of forebears had bred into him. The challenge lay in attaining the former while continuing to indulge the latter.

The pharaoh must have been fully aware of the game Aziru was playing, that at the very time he was protesting his loyalty he was carrying out blatant acts of aggression against Egyptian vassal territory. And the constant reports from his own officials, to say nothing of the never-ending stream of complaints from Rib-Hadda and his peers, made sure that the Amurrite problem was never far from his mind. Yet if granting Aziru the formal vassal status he repeatedly requested could ensure that henceforth he worked exclusively in his overlord's service, there was no doubt that he could be a far more effective agent of Egyptian interests in the area than many of the pharaoh's other vassal rulers. Moreover, there was really no viable alternative. Aziru was pre-eminent among the tribal chieftains of the region and held in high esteem by the local population, he had proven himself on the field of battle, he was an astute politician, and if he could be trusted he could serve as an important bulwark against the threat of Hittite encroachment on the Egyptians' Syrian territories. But how far *could* he be trusted? Reports from the pharaoh's own officials in the region were predominantly negative, or at best conflicting.

Clearly it was imperative for the pharaoh to make up his own mind—by arranging a personal meeting. Very likely it was at this point in his career that Aziru made his famous journey to Egypt—almost certainly at the pharaoh's instigation.[55] Allowing for both the outward and the return journeys as well as the time actually spent at the pharaoh's court, Aziru must have been absent from his own homeland for many months, probably a year or more. During his absence the affairs of his *de facto* kingdom lay primarily in the hands of his brother(?) Baaluya and his son(?) Beti-ilu. So long as he had Aziru at his court, the pharaoh was in no hurry to conclude negotiations with his delinquent, self-appointed vassal.

A protracted stay in Egypt was not entirely without benefit to Aziru, since no doubt he took whatever opportunities presented themselves for intelligence-gathering on a range of matters—particularly those on which useful information was not readily available through official sources. The radical reforms of the Amarna period must have been widely known throughout the Near East, and one could learn a great deal, by being on the spot, about how likely these were to impact on Egyptian foreign policy and Egyptian preparedness and willingness to commit significant military resources to the Syrian region. Aziru may well have welcomed the opportunity of visiting Egypt in order to gain the formal recognition he so much desired—and from the pharaoh in person—of his status as the legitimate ruler of one of Egypt's vassal states. But secretly he kept his options open, using his time in Egypt to assess what response he might expect were he subsequently to abandon his Egyptian allegiance. Indeed, if we can believe (and have correctly interpreted) a letter written later to the pharaoh by

Ilirabih, Rib-Hadda's brother and successor in Gubla, Aziru was already, during his time in Egypt, secretly conspiring with Aitakkama, ruler of Kadesh, which had recently become a Hittite dependency.[56]

From the Egyptian point of view, Aziru's visit to the pharaoh's court gave Akhenaten the opportunity of sizing up his prospective vassal, particularly in view of his past record of behaviour and his family background. In a world where diplomatic immunity counted for very little, the pharaoh could there and then have put paid to Aziru's career by detaining him indefinitely at his court. As we have noted, this was a sanction often imposed on foreign envoys to indicate displeasure with their royal masters. Akhenaten would certainly have had no qualms about keeping under indefinite house arrest one of his own Syrian vassals. Indeed, he may actually have flirted with this idea; there were rumours to the effect that Aziru would never be allowed to leave Egypt. Yet it is difficult to see how his enforced exile in Egypt would have led to any improvement in the situation in Amurru, where there was apparently no viable alternative to his leadership.

Nevertheless, back in Amurru Aziru's family grew increasingly concerned about his prolonged stay in Egypt. His son, probably Duppi-Teshub, wrote to the pharaoh's official Tutu, reporting the rumours that Aziru would never be allowed to return home, along with the accusation that he had sold his father to Egypt for gold.[57] The rumours had created dangerous instability in the region and were likely to encourage aggression against it by Egypt's enemies, like the kings of Nuhasse. Duppi-Teshub urged that his father be allowed to return home immediately.

Together with this letter there was another, addressed to Aziru himself.[58] It had been written by his close kin Baaluya and Beti-ilu, and contained alarming news. Hittite troops under their commander Lupakku had captured cities in the territory of Amka,[59] and there was a further report that the Hittite commander Zitana had arrived in Nuhasse with a force of some 90,000 infantry. This had yet to be confirmed, and the letter stated that Beti-ilu was to go to the Hittite commander to check the truth of the report. If it was in fact true' there could be little doubt that preparations were being made for a massive invasion of Egyptian territory west of the Orontes river.

The letter was clearly intended for the pharaoh as much as for Aziru,[60] and the report it contained was certainly exaggerated. To begin with, a Hittite force of 90, 000 men—twice the size of the force that later confronted Ramesses II at Kadesh —is inconceivable. Admittedly, Aziru's brothers stated that what they had heard was still to be verified. And there may well have been Hittite troop activity in the Nuhasse region, which now belonged within the Hittite sphere, and quite possibly some Hittite military action in the territory of Amka, which did not.[61] But the unverified report, with its rumour of an imminent massive Hittite invasion, was likely to have far more impact than one sent after the actual facts had been checked and the story modified. Indeed, it is quite possible that prior to

his departure for Egypt Aziru had arranged with his brothers to use such a ploy in the event that his stay in Egypt looked like being unduly prolonged.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the letter from Aziru's brothers was apparently instrumental in eliciting a prompt decision from the pharaoh to give Aziru the vassal status he required[62] and to allow him to return home. Probably at this time Akhenaten imposed a number of conditions upon the Amurrite, of which he later had cause to remind him. One of these obliged him to submit to regular inspections by the pharaoh's roving ambassador Hani, who would report back to the pharaoh on whether or not Aziru was fulfilling the terms of his agreement and genuinely serving Egypt's interests. Hani had apparently been on good terms with Aziru during the latter's stay in Egypt. As Aziru had himself declared, the distinguished Egyptian ambassador had treated him very hospitably, looking after him 'like a mother and father'.[63] So if after visiting Aziru in his own country Hani presented an unfavourable report card on his behaviour, he could hardly have been accused of personal prejudice, a claim made by Aziru about other Egyptian officials.

Whether or not Aziru ever had any serious intentions of maintaining his allegiance to the pharaoh—and what he learned of the current Egyptian regime while he was in Egypt may have helped him make up his mind about this—he left little doubt after his return that his policies and actions would be determined by his own ambitions and self-interest rather than by any pact he had made with his current overlord. It had now become increasingly clear to him that an alliance with the Great King of Hatti had more to offer, in terms of both his security and his ambitions, than an ongoing relationship with the pharaoh. For a time he maintained at least an outward show of loyalty to the pharaoh. But at this same time he began building alliances with states now firmly in the Hittite camp, notably with Aitakkama of Kadesh and Niqmaddu of Ugarit, besides entering into dialogue with the king of Hatti himself. It also became clear that the conditions imposed upon him by his overlord, probably during his stay in Egypt, were not being met. An increasingly anxious pharaoh wrote to him, demanding that he explain his failure to fulfil his promises.

We have two letters responding to the pharaoh's concerns.[64] First, Aziru had undertaken to rebuild the city of Sumur, which was left in a state of considerable disrepair after he had besieged and captured it earlier in his career. Given that Sumur was the Egyptians' most important northern stronghold, it was imperative that it be rebuilt and refortified. Why, then, had Aziru failed to attend to this as he had promised? He had a ready excuse, putting part of the blame on one of the pharaoh's own officials and assuring the pharaoh that the matter would be promptly rectified:

> The king, My Lord, has spoken about the (re)building of Sumur. The kings of Nuhasse have been at war with me and have taken my cities at the urging of Hatip (an Egyptian official). So I have not rebuilt Sumur. Now, in all haste, I am going to rebuild it.[65]

There is no evidence to suggest that Aziru ever made good on his promise.

He was also taken to task for snubbing the Egyptian ambassador Hani when the latter visited Amurru. The periodic inspections Hani had been commissioned to make of Aziru's kingdom no doubt involved direct contact with Aziru himself, as a means of assessing the vassal's conduct. Yet on Hani's arrival in Amurru, Aziru was not there to meet him. Instead, the ambassador had to make do with audiences with other members of Aziru's family. Almost certainly this was in direct breach of the vassal's agreement with Akhenaten, besides being an insult to Hani, and thereby to the Great King whose representative he was. Akhenaten accused Aziru of 'hiding' from the ambassador. But again Aziru had an excuse: 'My Lord, I was living in Tunip (at the time Hani came to my country), and was unaware that he had arrived. The moment I heard, I came after him, but failed to catch up with him.'[66] It was a lame excuse, and the pharaoh well knew it. Nor was he likely to be appeased by Aziru's assurance that Hani had been well looked after by his brothers in his absence and provided with horses and asses for his return home. In all probability Aziru had deliberately avoided a meeting with the Egyptian ambassador, for there was already much in his behaviour following his return to Amurru that he would find difficult to justify.

His occupation of Tunip was in itself an event for which he might well be called to account. As we have noted (Chapter 8), Tunip had been left without a leader on the death of its king, Aki-Teshub, and pleas from its citizens to the pharaoh to send back Aki-Teshub's son, who had been held as a virtual hostage in Egypt, remained unanswered: 'We have continued to write to the king, our lord, the king of Egypt, for twenty years, but not one word from our lord has come back to us.'[67] Tunip lay on the north-eastern periphery of Amurrite territory, on the west bank of the Orontes river. Its vacant throne and the pharaoh's apparent indifference to its fate provided Aziru with a temptation too great to resist. This is precisely what Tunip's citizens feared. After snatching up what remained of the territory of Niya (once Suppiluliuma had transferred the bulk of its territory to Ugarit), Aziru occupied Tunip and henceforth used it as one of his residences.

This gave him a base in close proximity to the subject territory of the king of Hatti, and indeed in close proximity to the Hittite king himself, who was at that time in Nuhasse, just to the north of Tunip some two days' journey away.[68] Aziru openly admitted to the pharaoh his contacts with the Hittite king Suppiluliuma. To be sure, Hatti and Egypt were at least nominally on friendly terms at this time, and Suppiluliuma had probably given an assurance that he had no designs on Egyptian subject territory in southern Syria. Even so, it is surprising that Akhenaten would have tolerated direct and probably repeated communication between one of his vassal rulers and the ruler of a foreign kingdom. This, despite any claim Aziru might have made that he was simply seeking through diplomatic inter-course to protect his own territory and therefore that of his overlord from foreign intervention, or that he was in some other way acting as an intermediary

between the pharaoh and the latter's Hittite brother. That was a job for the pharaoh's own appointed envoys!

We have suggested that since early in his career Aziru kept open his options, at least in his own mind, as to where his loyalties would eventually lie. In fact he had but two options: ally himself with the pharaoh or with the Great King of Hatti. There was no prospect that he could hold sway over a kingdom that was independent of either of these great powers—despite accusations by Rib-Hadda and others that this was his ultimate ambition. Already during his time in Egypt, he may have felt increasingly drawn to an alliance with the Hittites. But until such time as a switch from one Great King to the other could be successfully and safely achieved he would continue to declare his allegiance to Egypt.

Apart from other considerations, he could not be entirely sure that the Hittite Great King would be prepared to accept his defection—if Suppiluliuma genuinely wished to remain on good terms with his brother-king in Egypt. Nor could he be sure that if Suppiluliuma did accept his kingdom into the Hittite fold he would necessarily retain him on the vassal throne. This, at least, was an assurance he had secured from the pharaoh. Careful negotiations were needed with Hatti, preferably from a base which put Aziru close to its territory—and Tunip served admirably for this purpose—under the guise of a vassal whose contacts with the Hittite king were intended to serve the interests of his Egyptian overlord. The period over which such negotiations were spread could also be profitably used by Aziru to consolidate his position and extend his power in his own immediate region in partnership with Aitakkama of Kadesh, and at the expense of the states and cities of Niya, Qatna, Tunip and the cities in the territory of Amka—all the time, as Singer points out, writing conciliatory letters to Egypt.

His most vociferous opponent and victim was Rib-Hadda, king of Gubla. And it is to him we must return for the final episode in Aziru's relations with Egypt.

> Aziru has seized all my cities! Gubla is all that is left to me! So consider your loyal servant. If troops march against Gubla, they will seize it! Indeed Aziru has now mustered all the cities in order to seize it. Where am I to make a stand?[69]

Rib-Hadda had appealed repeatedly to Akhenaten for support against the aggression of his powerful and ruthless neighbour. 'If the king, My Lord, is desirous of protecting Gubla,' he wrote on another occasion, 'then let My Lord send 300 soldiers, 30 chariots, and 100 men from Kashi (Nubia/Kush), in order to guard Gubla, My Lord's city!'[70]

Yet Rib-Hadda perhaps protested too much. Akhenaten, like his father Amenhotep III before him, grew weary of the constant stream of complaints and requests dispatched to his court by the ruler of Gubla. 'Why does Rib-Hadda keep sending a tablet in this way to the palace?' Akhenaten exclaimed as yet another missive arrived from his feckless Syrian vassal.[71] 'You write to me more

than all the other mayors put together!' he complained to him on another occasion.[72] What *can* be said in Rib-Hadda's favour is that in spite of his threats to abandon his city or join forces with Abdi-Ashirta or Aziru—as many of his neighbours had done—he did appear to maintain his loyalty to the Egyptian crown almost to the very end of his life, in itself a notable display of courage against what appeared to be insuperable odds. It may be unfair to accuse him of fecklessness in the face of these odds. His own family urged him to come to terms with Aziru: The people of Gubla, and my own household, my own wife, kept saying to me: "Join the son of Abdi-Ashirta and let us make peace." But I refused. I gave no heed to them.'[73]

Finally, when his position appeared completely hopeless, he made one last-ditch effort to win support locally in the absence of any tangible response from the pharaoh, by travelling to Beirut and holding audience with its ruler Ammunira.[74] Ammunira was sympathetic to his cause, but apparently unwilling or unable to provide him with any material assistance. This may have been the final straw as far as Rib-Hadda's own family were concerned. Now that Rib-Hadda was deprived of all prospect of external support, his younger brother Ilirabih moved against him. Ilirabih had no intention of suffering martyrdom along with his brother. Seizing power in Gubla, he banned Rib-Hadda from it and handed over the ex-king's sons to the Amurrite rebels. We learn this from a letter Ammunira wrote to Akhenaten after Rib-Hadda went back to Beirut, where he sought and was granted refuge.[75]

Once more Rib-Hadda wrote to Egypt, with one final appeal to the pharaoh—for assistance in regaining his throne, capturing the traitors and ensuring that the city did not fall into the hands of Abdi-Ashirta's sons. Pleading his age and ill health as the reason for not travelling to Egypt himself, he entrusted his letter to a son who had escaped the clutches of Aziru and was now given the task of putting his father's case before the pharaoh. 'I myself cannot come to Egypt,' Rib-Hadda wrote in the letter sent with his son. 'I am old and my body is wracked with illness.'[76] But nothing eventuated from the mission. With his own city barred to him, and with no other city to go to, either because it was in Amurrite hands or in the hands of Amurrite supporters or because his presence in any city not yet within the Amurrite grasp would very likely have invited retaliation from Aziru, Rib-Hadda took one final humiliating step. Finding temporary residence in one of the cities of Sidon, he now threw himself on the mercy of his arch-enemy. He offered Aziru a substantial bribe for restoring him to his own city, presumably now as his longstanding tormentor's dependent.[77]

Aziru's response, referred to by Akhenaten in a letter he wrote to him,[78] has been differently interpreted. The traditional view is that Aziru showed no mercy to the man who had constantly denounced him (and his father before him). He handed him over to the local rulers in Sidon ('you gave him to (some) mayors'—thus Moran), at whose hands, presumably, he met his death. More recently Izre'el has interpreted the relevant words to mean that Aziru responded positively to the suppliant by giving him a mayoral appointment ('you gave (appointed) him for

mayoralty').[79] On the basis of this interpretation, Singer remarks that Akhenaten, far from reprimanding Aziru for his cruel treatment of Rib-Hadda, was in fact taking him to task for appointing him as a mayor, a prerogative reserved only for the pharaoh.[80] So we are left with two alternatives—a cruel and unceremonious end for the ex-king of Gubla at the hands of the Sidonian mayors, or submission to his arch-enemy and a relatively comfortable sinecure to see out his days! This is but one example of the difficulties involved in translating many passages in the Amarna letters. Different readings and interpretations of the same passage can sometimes result in almost diametrically opposed translations.

Unfortunately, then, Rib-Hadda's story must end on a somewhat anti-climactic note. We might like to think that after a life of stubborn resistance to Amurrite aggression Rib-Hadda died a heroic martyr's death at the hands of his enemies, proclaiming to the last his loyalty to his overlord. But the truth may well be that he finally and ignominiously submitted himself to the mercies of his arch-enemy and was rewarded, after a fashion, for so doing.

Whatever Aziru's treatment of Rib-Hadda, Akhenaten took strong exception to it, declaring that the Amurrite had acted beyond his brief. Yet this was only one item in a catalogue of offences detailed by the pharaoh in the furious letter he wrote to Aziru. Despite his continuing protestations of loyalty, Aziru could no longer be trusted: 'Everything you wrote to me was lies!' the pharaoh declared.[81] What particularly infuriated him was Aziru's collaboration with Aitakkama, ruler of Kadesh, who had been aggressively expanding his own territory at the expanse of Egypt's subject states: 'You are at peace with the ruler of Kadesh. The two of you take food and strong drink together. Why do you act so? Why are you at peace with a ruler with whom the king is fighting?'[82] The act of conviviality to which Akhenaten refers may well have celebrated a treaty which Aziru concluded with Aitakkama,[83] who was now Egypt's enemy.

Then followed the strongest threat yet to be delivered to Aziru: 'If for any reason whatsoever you prefer to do evil, and if you plot evil, treacherous things, then you, together with your entire family, shall die by the axe of the king!'[84] The pharaoh demanded that either Aziru or his son acting as his representative come to Egypt. No doubt the purpose of this visit was to answer charges which had accumulated against him—charges laid both by local vassal rulers who had suffered from Amurrite aggression and by the pharaoh's own officials. Had Aziru complied with his overlord's demand[85] he could have had few illusions about the outcome: at best, indefinite detention for himself, or for his son as a hostage for his father's future good behaviour. Akhenaten had made it quite clear to him that he was being presented with an ultimatum. Defiance of the ultimatum would almost certainly have met, for once, with prompt retaliation. Aziru had cause to reflect upon his father's fate. He well knew that the pharaoh was now resolute, and that ultimately he was not beyond Egypt's grasp, any more than his father had been. He had sought to avoid a showdown by seeking from Akhenaten a year's delay before answering the summons. The pharaoh had granted this. But the year was now up. No further extensions of time would be allowed: 'You

must not say: "May he grant me this year as well." If it is impossible for you to come before the king, your lord, you must send your son to the king, your lord, in your place.'[86]

Almost certainly, Aziru neither went to Egypt in response to the pharaoh's command nor sent his son there. It was now time to declare where he stood. He had long prepared for this moment. Since his earlier visit to Egypt he had maintained a semblance of loyalty to the pharaoh while strengthening his own position in Syria through regional alliances, most notably with Niqmaddu of Ugarit and Aitakkama of Kadesh, now both subject to Hatti. Secure in these alliances, faced with an ultimatum from his Egyptian overlord, and after communicating with the Hittite king on a number of occasions (and presumably having been assured of his support), Aziru now switched his allegiance to Hatti. He drew up with Suppiluliuma a treaty of vassalhood,[87] and henceforth until his death remained a firm subject of the Hittite Great King.

Akhenaten's response to his defection must have been one of considerable alarm, particularly as Aziru took with him into the Hittite camp the whole of the land of Amurru—a substantial territorial gain for Suppiluliuma, at his Egyptian brother's expense. Other Egyptian subject territories in the region were now severely at risk. This may well have brought Egypt and Hatti to the brink of open war. Evidence suggests that Akhenaten began preparing for a full-scale military campaign to win back his lost territories.[88] If so, the preparations were brought to an abrupt end by his death in 1336. Egypt's weakness and instability in the following period, which saw the demise of the once-great eighteenth dynasty, ensured that there would be no serious resurrection of these preparations—for the time being. But the loss of both Kadesh and Amurru to the Hittites continued to rankle in the breasts of their former overlords. Both states remained in dispute between the two great powers for decades to come, and indeed were to provide the final catalyst in the showdown between the forces of Hatti and Egypt in the battle of Kadesh, fought some sixty years after Akhenaten's death.

Notes

1 On Amurru and its rulers, see also Singer (1990, 1991), Klengel (1992: 160–74).

2 *EA* 144:22–6, after Oppenheim (1967:126).

3 Scholars disagree on the time-relationship between the careers of the Amurrite leader Abdi-Ashirta and subsequently his son Aziru, on the one hand, and the reigns of the pharaoh Amenhotep III and his son Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten on the other. Abdi-Ashirta and Aziru both figure prominently in the letters of Rib- Hadda, king of Gubla, discussed below (pp. 147). Singer (1991:148) believes that all of Abdi-Ashirta's recorded activities fell within the reign of Akhenaten, after the transfer of the capital to Akhetaten in Year 5, while noting that his career in Amurru may have started long before his first appearance in the Amarna correspondence. *Contra* Singer, Freu (2002b:90) believes that Abdi-Ashirta's activities, at least those recorded in the 'first series' of Rib-Hadda's letters, belong within the reign of

Amenhotep III. The matter is further complicated by the question of whether or not, or for how long, there was a co-regency between Amenhotep III and his son. We shall skirt round these problems here by simply using the term ‘pharaoh’ to refer to the occupant of the Egyptian throne while Amurru was under Abdi-Ashirta’s control. We can confidently assign the activities of his son Aziru, as recorded in the ‘second series’ of Rib-Hadda’s letters, as well as in Aziru’s own correspondence with Egypt, to the reign of Akhenaten.

4 Greek Simyra. It lay at the mouth of the Nahr el-Kabir river.

5 *EA* 71:16.

6 *EA* 84:11–14.

7 Based on Moran’s restoration of the fragmentary opening lines of *EA* 62. This is a letter from Abdi-Ashirta to Pahhanate, in which Abdi-Ashirta apparently quotes Pahhanate’s words of denunciation.

8 *EA* 60:19–29, trans. Moran.

9 Cf. Singer (1991:144), who suggests that his letters to Egypt were probably written from there.

10 *EA* 85:51–5; see also *EA* 95:27–33. In this context note also the claim made by Rib-Hadda in *EA* 90:19–20 that Abdi-Ashirta had visited Mitanni.

11 Liverani (1998:391–2).

12 See Singer (1991:146–8), who opposes any notion of collaboration between Abdi-Ashirta and either Mitanni *or* Hatti.

13 *EA* 74:15–19.

14 *EA* 76:11–16.

15 Thus Aduna, king of Irqata (*EA* 75:25–6).

16 *EA* 74:23–30, after Moran.

17 *EA* 73:17–25, after Moran.

18 *EA* 88:16.

19 *EA* 92:35–7, trans. Moran.

20 To judge from Zimredda’s letter to the pharaoh, *EA* 144:22–30.

21 *EA* 83:21–7.

22 EA 89:15–29.

23 *EA* 85:6–15.

24 This and the following quotations in this paragraph are from *EA* 74:31–53, and are adapted from the trans. by Moran.

25 *EA* 81:12–14, after Moran.

26 Adapted from *EA* 81:15–16 and 82:38–9.

27 Adapted and condensed from *EA* 83:23–51.

28 *EA* 91:16–19, after Moran. For the insertion of ‘shekels’ in the text, see Moran (1992:165, n. 4).

29 Singer (1991:146); he argues against the suggestion that the pharaoh had finally taken action against Abdi-Ashirta for his alleged collaboration with Mitanni or Hatti.

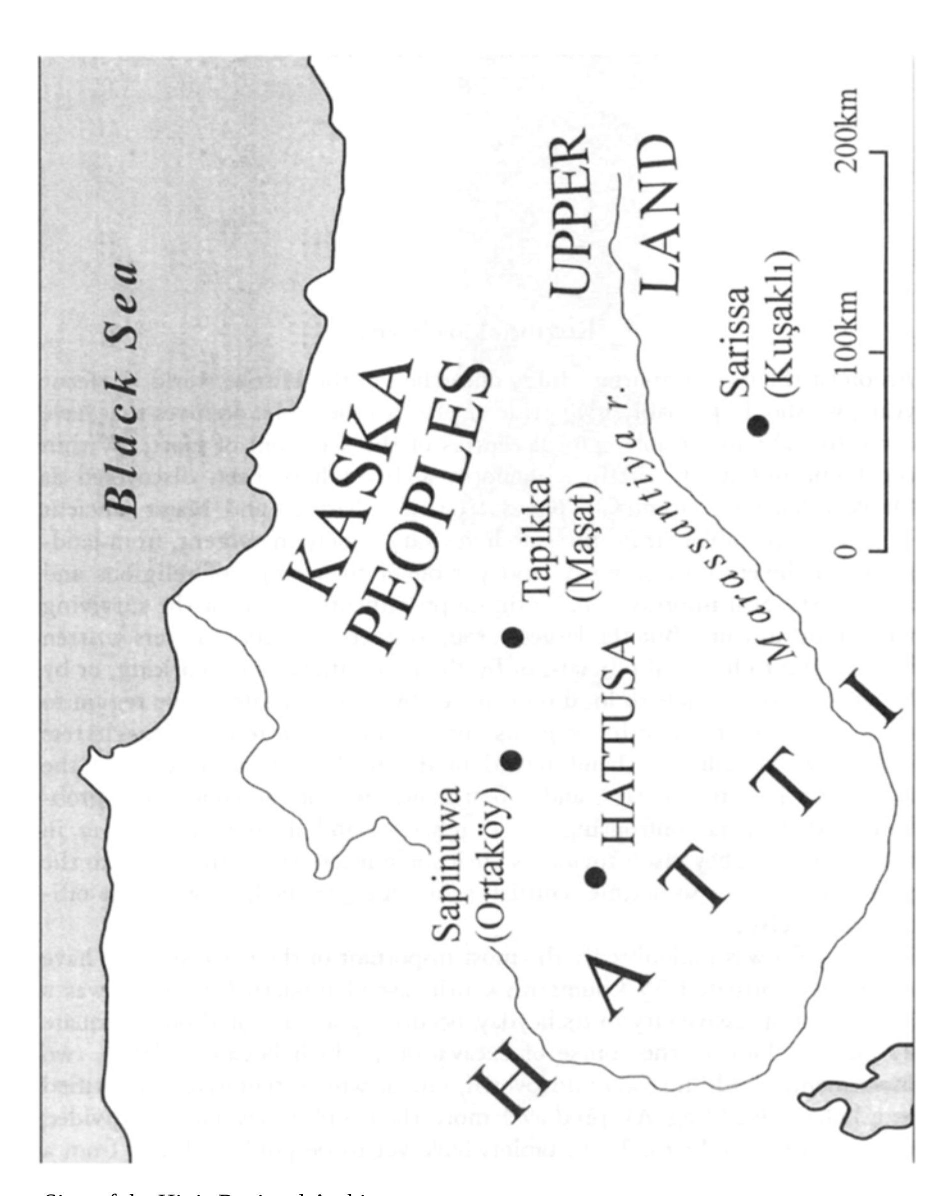
30 *EA* 117:21–8, trans. Moran. Cf. *EA* 108:25–33, where the reading is less certain.

31 *EA* 101. All that survives is the second of a two-tablet letter which does not preserve its author’s name.

32 *EA* 101:29–30.

33 Note the alternative interpretation proposed by Altman (1977), cited also by Moran (1992:174, n. 4). More recently Liverani (1998:389, 393–4) has proposed ‘they will defeat Abdi-Ashirta!’
34 *EA* 103:8–11, after Moran.
35 *EA* 104:6–13. Singer (1991:149) notes that all these places lay in the southern part of Amurru, in the zone bordering the domain of Gubla.
36 *EA* 102:15–16.
37 *EA* 102:17–19, after Moran.
38 *EA* 104:49–54.
39 Biblical Arvad, mod. Ruad.
40 *EA* 105:11–17.
41 *EA* 105:83–5, after Moran.
42 *EA* 105:11–13.
43 *EA* 103:20–2, after Moran.
44 *EA* 103:23–9, trans. Moran.
45 *EA* 104:31–6, trans. Moran.
46 *EA* 106:10–11.
47 *EA* 157:9–19
48 *EA* 156:10–12. He did so apparently at the pharaoh’s request. Singer (1990: 135) comments that this may be regarded as a first sign of the pharaoh’s willingness to accept Aziru’s submission, despite the opposition of some Egyptian officials in Sumur.
49 See the comments of Singer (1991:150) on the difficult question of whether Aziru’s letters with his diplomatic overtures to Egypt were dispatched before or after his takeover of Sumur.
50 *EA* 171:12–13.
51 *EA* 158:14–19.
52 Later perhaps he was looked upon as one who might represent the Amurrite cause in a more favourable light before the pharaoh.
53 *EA* 157:28–33.
54 *EA* 157:37–41.
55 I follow here the chronology of Aziru’s career proposed by Singer (1990: 134–44).
56 *EA* 140:20–5. Cf. Singer (1990:136). It is difficult to see how he could have done this without the pharaoh’s knowledge, given the mechanics of the messenger system, and we must remember that the letter comes from a highly biased source. More likely, the episode it refers to belongs within the later context of dealings between Aitakkama and Aziru after the latter’s return to his homeland.
57 *EA* 169:16–21.
58 *EA* 170.
59 The Beqa’ valley between Lebanon and Antilebanon.
60 Even if the assumption that the letter was captured by the Egyptian authorities is correct (see Singer 1990:133–4, n. 1), almost certainly it was intended to fall into their hands. Cohen (2000:93) speaks of *EA* 170 conjuring up a picture of an Amurru skilfully manoeuvring between the Great Powers on the basis of sound intelligence.
61 For a concise summary of Hittite activity in the region at this time, see James (2000:118).

62 As indicated, for example, in the pharaoh's letter to him, *EA* 162, where Aziru is addressed as 'ruler *(hazannu)* of Amurru' (line 1).
63 *EA* 161:28–9.
64 *EA* 160 and 161.
65 *EA* 161:35–40, after Moran.
66 *EA* 161:12–16.
67 *EA* 59:43–6.
68 *EA* 165:28–41. Singer (1991:153) sees this reference as a valuable chronological clue which can probably be related to Suppiluliuma's one-year Syrian campaign (*c*. 1340).
69 *EA* 124:9–16, after Moran.
70 *EA* 131:10–14.
71 *EA* 106:13–15, trans. Moran.
72 *EA* 124:36–7.
73 *EA* 136:8–15.
74 *EA* 136:24–32.
75 *EA* 142:15–24.
76 *EA* 137:27–30.
77 *EA* 162:2–12.
78 *EA* 162.
79 Izre'el (1991:§2.3.2.1).
80 Singer (1990:141, n. 1).
81 *EA* 162:19–20.
82 *EA* 162:22–5, trans. Moran.
83 Thus Westbrook (2000:38).
84 *EA* 162:35–8 trans. Moran.
85 Following Singer's chronology, this would have been his second visit to Egypt.
86 *EA* 162:50–3.
87 Probably soon after the one-year Syrian war. Cf. Singer (1991:154).
88 See Chapter 10, and also Singer (1990:164–5; 1991:155).



Sites of the Hittie Regional Archives

10
HITTITE FRONTIER CORRESPONDENCE

Regional archives

Amongst the most important finds unearthed in the Hittite world in recent years, we should probably give pride of place to the tablet archives that have come to light in several regional centres of the kingdom of Hatti. Within the homeland itself, Hittite cuneiform archives have been discovered at Ortaköy (ancient Sapinuwa), Kuşakli (ancient Sarissa) and Maşat (ancient Tapikka). The tablets from these archives vary widely in content, from land-grants to inventories of goods and personnel to a range of religious and cultic texts. Seal impressions also figure prominently amongst the surviving written documents. But the largest group of texts consists of letters written by the king to his local officials, or by the local officials to their king, or by Hattusa-based officials to local officials, or by local officials in one region to their counterparts in other regions. In a number of respects the letters provide a valuable first-hand record of day-to-day administration in the kingdom's regional centres, and a first-hand view of the conditions, problems and dangers confronting the king's civil and military appointees in these regions. They also provide us with some interesting glimpses into the personal relations, sometimes cordial, sometimes strained, between the officials themselves.

Sapinuwa was undoubtedly the most important of the three sites we have mentioned. Situated 55 kilometres south-east of modern Çorum, it was a large and impressive city in its heyday, occupying an area of almost 9 square kilometres. During the course of excavations, which began in 1990, two monumental buildings were uncovered, one of which, tentatively identified as a palace (Building A), produced more than 3,000 clay tablets, divided amongst three archives. These tablets have yet to be published, but from a preliminary report of their contents, as well as from frequent references to Sapinuwa in the archives of the capital, it is clear that the city was not merely an important religious and administrative centre of Hatti but also a place of residence for the Hittite Great King,[1] at least during the period prior to the catastrophic 'concentric invasions' (see below, 180). It served too as an important military base, where

troops from the surrounding areas were mustered for the defence of the homeland's northern frontier.[2]

The year 1993 saw the start of excavations on the site of Kuşaklıı, lying some 200 kilometres south-east of Hattusa. In the following year tablets began to come to light, enabling the site to be identified with ancient Sarissa, already known from Hittite texts as a cult centre. Sarissa was a well-fortified city of medium size, roughly 18 hectares in area. The texts from the small archive discovered in the city are primarily of a cultic and ritual nature. Some sixty-five sealings have also been unearthed on the site.[3]

Further investigations of the texts from the above sites will undoubtedly contribute much to our understanding of life in the outlying administrative regions of the Hittite homeland. But the main focus of our attention in this chapter will be the tablet archive discovered at Maşat, the site of ancient Tapikka,[4] lying some 150 kilometres north-east of Hattusa.

The Tapikka letters[5]

Tapikka served as an administrative centre and military outpost in the homeland's northern frontier region, as it was in the fifteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The settlement itself, covering an area of some 10 hectares, was excavated during the 1970s. It was of modest proportions and clearly less important than Sapinuwa, which lay a two-day march to its west. However, its tablet archive, the first such to come to light outside the Hittite capital, has provided us with a rich source of information on the Hittite kingdom in an otherwise very poorly documented period. The archive, whose contents include ninety-six letters (out of a total of some 116 texts), came from a building commonly designated as a 'palace' in level III of the five-level site, and can be dated quite precisely to the reign of Tudhaliya III, father of Suppiluliuma, who reigned in the early decades of the fourteenth century.[6]

This was a critical period in Hittite history, for it was within Tudhaliya's reign that the kingdom of Hatti came close to total annihilation. Enemy forces crossed Hatti's frontiers from all directions, launching a series of attacks upon the homeland in what is now referred to as the 'concentric invasions'. As we have noted (Chapter 1), the homeland was sacked, and the royal court was forced to abandon its capital and seek refuge in Samuha, near the homeland's north-eastern periphery. The Tapikka letters, which probably span no more than a few years at most, must date shortly before this catastrophic event. Indeed it is possible that disaster overtook the regional outpost before the last letters discovered in its archive and destined for Hattusa were able to be sent. Do the letters themselves contain any evidence of the impending catastrophe? To this we shall return.

But let us first turn our attention to the letter-writers and their recipients. A great many of the letters in the archive had been sent by the Great King himself to his local officials in Tapikka. The king kept in regular, direct contact with these officials, taking a close personal interest in local affairs and providing the

officials with constant instruction on how they should handle them. His Majesty's orders were transmitted in dispatches sent from the palace (sometimes in response to written communications from the officials), as well as in face-to-face briefings, the officials being regularly summoned to Hattusa for this purpose. It seems that those so instructed were allowed little scope for exercising any initiative of their own. That may, of course, reflect the precarious nature of Hittite authority in the Tapikka region, which lay on the edge of the Kaska zone and was particularly vulnerable to attack by hostile Kaskan forces. The king was concerned to ensure that all possible measures were taken to ensure the region's security, and very likely involved himself much more directly in the affairs of this region than in other regions, which were apparently less vulnerable to enemy action.

Dispatches from the king covered a range of topics. They contained demands for reports on enemy movements (a number of Hittites were sent to the region as scouts or spies); they provided responses to requests for auxiliary troops to strengthen the existing defence forces; they issued instructions relating to the relocation of populations in territories threatened by the enemy; they stipulated the treatment to be accorded to defectors and enemy prisoners who had surrendered or been taken in battle.

These terse, straight-to-the-point communications belong to a category quite different from the diplomatic correspondence which passed between brother-kings, or between a king and his vassal rulers. When Kassu, writing from Tapikka, sent his overlord a request for reinforcements, the reply he received wasted no time on formalities: Thus His Majesty: Say to Kassu: "Regarding what you have written to me on the matter of the chariots, note this: I have now sent forth the chariots. Look out for them."'[7] Dispatches between officials were rather less terse, for in these it was customary to address one's correspondent as 'my brother', or, if more appropriate, 'my son', and to add good wishes for his health and well-being. Indeed, this was a standard way at all social levels of greeting one's peers,[8] as we have already observed in the more elaborate greetings formulae used by Great Kings when writing to one another.

Kassu is the most frequently mentioned official in the Tapikka letters, the recipient of many dispatches both from the Great King and from a number of the king's officials in Hattusa. Although it was not the practice in the correspondence to address the recipients by their titles, we can conclude from one of the letters that Kassu was a high-ranking military commander with special plenary powers in the immediate region,[9] for whose defence he was primarily responsible;[10] hence his frequent communications with his overlord in Hattusa on matters of security and defence and enemy movements.

Neither Kassu nor his colleagues in Tapikka appear to have kept copies or drafts of the letters which they sent to Hattusa. However, we can readily deduce the contents of these letters from the replies they received. Thus His Majesty, in acknowledging a report from Kassu on enemy movements, instructed him to ensure that the enemy were not again allowed to depart from their own territory,

but were kept confined to it.[11] In another letter the Great King referred to a dispatch he had received from Kassu about the surrender of an apparently large number of Kaskans: ‘As for what you have written to me: “See, the Kaska come in great numbers for peace…”, send forth before His Majesty the Kaska who come seeking peace.’[12]

The treatment of enemy captives is discussed in several of the letters. From at least the time of Suppiluliuma I, such captives were regularly transported back to the homeland, where they were used as labour to supplement the local workforces. During the transportation process, a substantial number of troops must have been required to guard them and prevent them from escaping back to their own lands. However, some of the captives were retained in the frontier regions, and in their case additional measures may have been taken to ensure that they remained submissive to their captors. This possibility arises from several of the texts in the Tapikka archive which refer to blind—or blinded—prisoners. One of these texts (though not one of the letters) lists prisoners available for ransom back to their own people. The prisoners were divided into two categories: those who were blind and those who were sighted.[13] We do not know how the former came to lose their sight. Perhaps after they were captured a number of prisoners had their eyes put out to prevent their escape or as a warning to others contemplating escape. Alternatively, they may have lost their sight through battle injuries - though, as Professor Hoffner comments, the proportion of persons listed in the blind category seems rather too high to be attributed to the accidents of battle. Perhaps, as he suggests, blinding was a form of punishment reserved for the leaders of rebel groups.[14]

A letter from an official called Kikarsa contains a further reference to blind prisoners. In an attempt to track down a particular person among those who had lost their sight, Kikarsa wrote to his colleague Tahazzili, an official probably based in Tapikka. Tahazzili responded thus:

> On the matter of the blind men about whom you wrote to me: They have conducted all of the blind men up to the city of Sapinuwa. They have left behind here ten blind men (to work) in the mill-houses. I have inquired about them, and there is no one here by the name you wrote to me. You should write to Sarpa in Sapinuwa. All the (other) blind men are there.[15]

As the letter makes clear, even blind prisoners had their uses. In this case they were captives forced to work in the local mills, for we learn in another letter that some of them managed to escape their captivity as mill-workers and leave Sapinuwa.[16] Tahazzili’s difficulty in locating his man (whom he probably intended to ransom) adds further weight to the assumption that the numbers of prisoners who had been deprived of their sight was substantial, and that their condition was one which their captors had inflicted upon them. Given that in this same archive we have a letter from the Hittite king threatening to blind two of his own high-ranking officials if they failed to respond promptly to his commands

(see pp. 179), Hittite captors would probably have had few qualms about putting out the eyes of recalcitrant enemy prisoners, either as a matter of expediency or as a warning to their fellows, or both.

We noted above (pp. 172) a letter from the king to Kassu which deals with the surrender of a number of Kaskans to Hittite authorities in the local region. The letter is a relatively long one, in which the king issued instructions on several matters by way of response to reports he had received from Kassu. After the scribe had taken down some forty-one lines of text from the king, he ruled off with a double horizontal line. That marked the end of the official dispatch. But after this 'paragraph divider' there are eleven more lines of text. These have nothing to do with the king's communication. They constitute an entirely new message, with a new author and a new addressee:

> Say to Himuili, my beloved brother: Thus (speaks) your brother Hattusili: 'May all be well with you. May the gods watch over you and keep you safe! As for what you have written to me about your son-in-law, I have the matter in mind. I will speak of it in the palace. The matter will be taken up with His Majesty.'[17]

We are thus introduced to two more persons who figure frequently in the Tapikka correspondence. Himuili was the most prominent Tapikka-based person in this correspondence after Kassu. He held the post of *'BĒL MADGALTI'*, a kind of regional governor with a range of military, judicial and administrative responsibilities.[18] Hattusili (not to be confused with any of the Hittite kings of that name) was apparently a close friend of Himuili with powerful connections in the royal court. He undertook to use his influence in the court on a matter concerning Himuili's son-in-law. It seems that Himuili was seeking some sort of career advancement for his daughter's husband using the good services of his well-connected friend Hattusili.

It was common practice for officials in His Majesty's service to append to royal dispatches messages addressed to their friends and colleagues. Generally one, sometimes two, messages were so attached. The Tapikka archive contains numerous examples of the practice, with informal communications passing between high-ranking functionaries (as in the example above) as well as between lower-level scribes. It was a very useful way of conveying information and requests, often of a personal and sometimes of a trivial, mundane nature, between officials employed in different locations in the royal administration. An appended message dealing with a private domestic matter sometimes gives an unintentional touch of bathos to an official dispatch concerned with matters of serious import. But the frequency of the practice suggests that it was carried out with the king's knowledge or was at least condoned by him, rather like permitting embassy staff today to send personal mail in the diplomatic pouch.

Many of the scribes and officials eager to pursue an upwardly mobile career in the service of their overlord were probably obliged to spend a term of office in

one or more of the kingdom's regional centres like Tapikka. Indeed, even some of the younger members of the royal family were relegated for a time to the provinces, presumably to broaden their range of experience in preparation for the roles they would later be called on to play in the service of their kingdom. While in the provinces, young royals no doubt remained under the watchful eye of officials charged with their safety and security. We have two letters from Tapikka in which officials apparently assigned this responsibility reported to His Majesty that all was well with his son (in one case) and his daughters (in the other). He was assured that he need have no concern about them.[19]

While a period of service in the provinces was probably a requirement for many officials originating from Hattusa, the reverse seems also to have applied. We know, for example, of a scribe called Tarhunmiya who had property in Tapikka while he himself was employed in the capital.[20] This may indicate that he was in fact a resident of the Tapikka region but had temporarily been seconded to Hattusa. We have several other letters in which scribes in Hattusa wrote to colleagues in Tapikka asking after their property there.

Since officials sent to the provinces from the capital apparently did not take their families with them, many were understandably anxious about the welfare of those they left behind. A number of the messages appended to official letters from Hattusa sought to assure them that all was well. For example, after recording instructions from the king to Kassu about action to be taken in relation to enemy troop movements,[21] the scribe Surihili added a note of his own. It was a personal message of greetings and reassurance addressed to his friend and colleague Uzzu, a scribe employed in the Tapikka chancellery. Knowing that the king's correspondence with Kassu would pass through Uzzu's hands, Surihili could be sure his message would reach his friend: 'To Uzzu, my beloved brother, from your brother Surihili', it began:

> May all be well with you. May the gods and Ea, King of Wisdom, keep you safe! Look, everything is fine with your house. And every thing is fine with your wife. There is nothing for you to worry about. My beloved brother, do send back your greetings to me.[22]

We also have messages sent to Uzzu by the Hattusa-based scribe Maresre. One of these was appended to a letter addressed by His Majesty to the governor Himuili. After ruling a double line under the king's dispatch, Maresre added a note to Uzzu, stating that Himuili had promised him an ox and asking Uzzu to assist Himuili in having it brought to Hattusa.[23] In another message Maresre asked Uzzu to send him some cooks, if he happened to find any good ones there, along with some weapons.[24] During a period when he was back in Hattusa, Himuili made a similar request of Huilli, one of his colleagues in Tapikka, after gently rebuking Huilli for not writing to him.[25] So too an official called Ilitukulti complained to Adadbeli, scribe in Tapikka, about Adadbeli's failure to answer

his letters: To my beloved brother I repeatedly write my greetings. But you have never written back your greetings to me.'[26]

Rebukes of a more serious nature sometimes surface in the correspond ence between officials in Hattusa and Tapikka. Thus an unnamed military commander stationed in Tapikka wrote a letter of complaint to Pallanna and Zartummanni, officials in Hattusa, holding them responsible for the unjust treatment he had suffered, apparently for offences of which he was, or claimed to be, totally innocent.[27] He threatened to take the matter directly to the king. That, he declared, would lead to a full investigation in Tapikka and the arrest of the real culprits, who would be conveyed to Hattusa and tried in His Majesty's court. The offences, whatever their nature, were evidently quite serious, for they involved a high-ranking military officer, perhaps Kassu himself.[28] Unfortunately we know none of the details, but it seems that the whole affair was of sufficient gravity to warrant a royal enquiry in Tapikka, and ultimately a trial before the king's court.

Tensions sometimes emerged in the correspondence between Tapikka's two chief officials Kassu and Himuili—not surprisingly, perhaps, as there was probably a good deal of overlap between their areas of authority. Disagreements arose over their respective powers and responsibilities, on matters such as the chain of communication in receiving and responding to orders from Hattusa. Thus Kassu rebuked Himuili and his associates for failing to send on to him the king's messengers: 'Are they referred to as *your* servants?' he exclaimed. 'Do not the messengers rather belong to our lord, as the land belongs to our lord?'[29]

Kassu also figured in an acrimonious exchange with 'the priest' of Kizzuwadna in south-east Anatolia.[30] The official in question was probably a man called Kantuzzili (known from other sources as high priest of Teshub and Hepat), who enjoyed in Kizzuwadna a status equivalent to that of an appanage king.[31] The priest had previously written to Kassu demanding the return of twenty of his subjects who for one reason or another had entered the region which fell under Kassu's jurisdiction. Kassu had written back, refusing to hand them over: 'Refer the matter to the palace', he advised his correspondent, peremptorily dismissing his demand. The priest responded furiously, declaring he would do just that, and warning Kassu that he would also take further retribution by detaining any of Kassu's subjects who came into territory under *his* authority.

Squabbles and disputes of this kind between Hatti's subject states were probably quite common, and the resources of the king's court may have been severely taxed by the frequency with which such matters were brought to it for resolution. In the Tapikka letters alone, threats were made on a number of occasions to take a dispute directly to the king for settlement. Under Hittite law, complainants had a perfect right to do so.

This is further illustrated by a letter which the high-ranking functionary Hattusili sent from Hattusa to Governor Himuili.[32] In it Hattusili delivered a stern reprimand to Himuili for failing to protect the interests in Tapikka of the scribe Tarhunmiya. As we have noted, Tarhunmiya was probably a resident of Tapikka, though he was currently employed in the Hittite capital. It seems that in

his absence the Tapikkan authorities had claimed that he was liable for taxes and state services (*sahhan* and *luzzi*) on his property there, even though he had been exempt from such liabilities in the past. When he protested, the authorities had apparently moved to take possession of his house, either to sell it or as surety against payment of his debt. As *BĒL MADGALTI* in the region, Himuili had jurisdiction over such matters.

We know from a number of stipulations in the Hittite Laws that certain officials in the Hittite administration were granted exemption from taxes,[33] and apparently Tarhunmiya's scribal office carried with it the privilege of such exemption. Tarhunmiya appended a message of his own to Hattusili's letter, appealing to Himuili, as a son to his father, to uphold his rights and protect his property:

> Oh my lord, direct your attention to my house! Ensure that they inflict no harm upon it. Further, my lord, rule favourably upon the legal dispute now before me. Set everything aright. Further, have a guard placed before my house. Do not allow the people of the land and the people of the city to inflict any harm upon it. Further, [please note that] *sahhan* and *luzzi* were never imposed upon me there. Now the people of the city have imposed *sahhan* and *luzzi*. My lord, question the people of the land as to whether at any time they have imposed *sahhan* and *luzzi* upon me.[34]

This was not the first time the scribe had approached Himuili on this matter,[35] but his earlier appeals had apparently fallen on deaf ears. Even so he persisted, with the firm backing of the powerful and by now very irate Hattusili. This eminent bureaucrat had already written several times to Himuili on the scribe's behalf, and probably because of his friendship with Himuili had so far refrained from reporting him to the king for dereliction of duty. But his patience was at an end. He now spelled out to Himuili, for the last time, exactly what was expected of him: 'There in your administrative district there is only one scribal household', he wrote;

> but in your town others continually oppress him [i.e. Tarhunmiya]. Are there *sahhan* and *luzzi* (obligations) for scribes? Why (then) does he perform them there? Now pay attention! They shall not continue to oppress him! If this matter is not resolved, 111 go and speak about it in the palace![36]

The message to the governor was clear. Tarhunmiya was to be exempted from tax obligations and kept safe from all harm. If Himuili still refused to take the appropriate action the matter would immediately be referred to the king.

With all his other responsibilities and problems, is it likely that His Majesty would have bothered himself with the tax problems of one of his chancellery

scribes? To judge from the direct intervention of a later Great King in a very similar situation, the answer could well be yes.

The situation occurred in the city of Emar, which lay on the west bank of the middle Euphrates. Re-established by the Hittites during the reigns of Suppiluliuma I and Mursili II, Emar had been placed under the jurisdiction of the viceroy at Carchemish, whose administrative responsibilities in the city were shared by a local ruler and council of elders. During the reign of Mursili or a later king, a priest in Emar called Zu-Ba'al was suddenly given notice that his father's house and his vineyard were to be taken from him and assigned to someone else.[37] He would now also be liable for taxes and state services from which he had previously been exempt. Zu-Ba'al appealed directly to the Great King,[38] claiming that he was a victim of injustice and naming a Hittite official called Alziyamuwa[39] as the person responsible for his plight. The king responded by writing directly to Alziyamuwa:

> Thus (speaks) My Sun: Say to Alziyamuwa: Look, this Zu-Ba'al, a priest, man of Ashtata, has prostrated himself before me (in these terms): The house of my parent AN-damali, and the vineyard, Alziyamuwa is taking from me and giving them to Palluwa. As for the *sahhan,* I never before paid it. But now they have imposed upon me the *sahhan* and the *luzzi,* and I have to pay them.'

His Majesty ruled as follows:

> The house and the vineyard must not be taken from him! As for the *sahhan* which he has never before paid, why have you imposed the *sahhan* and *luzzi* upon him now? But what he used to pay in the past, he should still keep paying. And no-one should oppress him![40]

From a second letter which originated in Emar but has recently turned up in the Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, we know that Zu-Ba'al's case was also referred to the viceroy at Carchemish. He too wrote to Alziyamuwa. In fact his letter closely parallels that of the Great King, a copy of which he very likely had before him when he dictated his own letter.[41] Indeed, he may have gone further than his overlord, by granting Zu-Ba'al exemption even from taxes for which he had previously been liable. Singer comments on the remarkable fact that a local clergyman from a distant province should not merely be able to direct his appeal to the king, but that the king, as well his viceroy (who must have been fully empowered to act on his own in such matters) should deal with the case in person.[42]

Returning to Tapikka, and on a somewhat lighter note, we come across a complaint addressed by Hasammeli, a scribe in Hattusa, to the scribe Uzzu in Tapikka. The official part of the document is a dispatch to the governor Himuili from the king, who promised to send Himuili horses and chariots, and urged him

to be on the alert against enemy movements in his region.[43] After taking down the king's words, Hasammeli appended a message of his own to Uzzu, through whose hands he knew the tablet would pass. He came straight to the point: 'You keep writing to me about this matter of my maid!' he complained. 'I don't want to hear anything more!' It seems that Hasammeli had made available one of his maidservants to work in Uzzu's household in Tapikka. But his generosity turned sour when Uzzu wrote to him, apparently on more than one occasion, accusing the girl of stealing and threatening to take into his own hands the matter of her punishment. Hasammeli was not at all pleased at this prospect. He had no desire to receive his property back in a damaged state after lending her to his fellow scribe, presumably as a gesture of friendship. So he warned Uzzu not to harm the girl in any way. 'See that you hand her over to the messenger in good condition, and he will bring her back to me. And whatever the girl has stolen you can take threefold compensation for it!' We have here a classic instance of the sometimes amusingly incongruous character of two or more letters inscribed on the one tablet: in this case an urgent warning issued by His Majesty on matters of regional security yields abruptly to a scribe's complaints about a housemaid with sticky fingers.

The trivia which provide much of the content of the appendages to the official dispatches, and also much of the colour and personal interest of the letters as a whole, helps create an impression of normality, of 'business as usual' in the Tapikka region. But the impression is a misleading one. The personal exchanges contained in the appendages serve merely as brief diver sions from the more serious matters highlighted in the official dispatches, which clearly reflect the dangers and threats constantly faced by the inhabitants of this highly vulnerable part of the Hittite realm. Above all, there was the chronic Kaskan menace. This grew ever greater as pressures upon the Hittite homeland frontiers steadily mounted from other directions as well.

From time to time the letters report Hittite successes against the enemy. But these reports do little to disguise the fragility of Hittite authority in the region. 'In two places the enemy has crossed the frontiers in great numbers', one letter informs us.[44] Another reports cattle raids on Hittite territory by the Kaskans, who also succeeded in gaining control of the communication routes, taking advantage of the absence of Kassu and two of his colleagues in Hattusa.[45] Raids on crops were a further problem. In a dispatch from the town of Kasepura, Piseni informed His Majesty: 'The enemy marched in great numbers in the night, in one place 600 enemy, in another place 400 enemy, and harvested the grain.'[46] The king ordered the Tapikkan officials Tatta and Hulli to proceed at once to Kasepura to reap the grain and take it to the threshing floor, ensuring above all that it did not fall into enemy hands. Enemy raids on food-producing lands could have had the most serious consequences, for the homeland was highly dependent on these lands. Significant shortfalls in livestock and grain production, whether through natural causes or enemy action, could well lead to widespread famine. It was vital that the agricultural produce of the state be secured against the enemy at

all costs. An outbreak of fever and plague were yet further hazards faced by the local population.[47]

In several letters the king issued peremptory summonses to the local military commanders to appear with their troops before him, sometimes threatening them with dire consequences if they failed to carry out his orders promptly: ‘Say to Kassu and Zilapiya: “As soon as this letter reaches you, come in three days before His Majesty with the troops mustered there and also the chariots which are there with you.”’[48] ‘Say to Kassu and Zilapiya: “As soon as this letter reaches you, come with all haste before His Majesty. If not, (my men) will come to you and blind you on the spot!”’[49] ‘You Pipappa, bring the UKU.UŠ troops across as quickly as possible. Bring them here to the army. If not, you will come (and) you will die!’[50] His Majesty could hardly have made more emphatic the necessity of obeying his orders without hesitation or delay. And, indeed, the rarity in the Hittite world of death and particularly mutilation as forms of punishment, at least for free persons, highlights the gravity of the crisis now confronting the kingdom.

The most serious consequences could result from even the slightest delay in responding to the king’s command; hence the threats issued by the king to ensure immediate and absolute compliance. In another letter, the king ordered Kassu and Pipappa to mobilize 1,700 infantry from the town of Ishupitta with all haste, bringing them in two days to Sapinuwa, where he himself would be.[51] Sapinuwa, the largest town in the region, was to serve as a mustering point for Hittite forces assembled from the various sub-regions and placed under the king’s personal command. No doubt officials in other towns received orders similar to those received by Kassu and Pipappa. These urgent dispatches from the king to his military officers may well represent one of the last-ditch efforts which he made to secure the northern frontiers against his kingdom’s enemies.

But whatever success his troops may have had in this region, the home-land was doomed. Shortly afterwards, it was engulfed by invading enemy forces:

> The Kaskan enemy came and sacked the Hatti lands and he made Nenassa his frontier. From the Lower Land came the Arzawan enemy, and he too sacked the Hatti lands, and he made Tuwanuwa and Uda his frontier. From afar, the Arawannan enemy came and sacked the whole of the Land of Gassiya. From afar, the Azzian enemy came and sacked all the Upper Lands and he made Samuha his frontier. The Isuwan enemy came and sacked the Land of Tegarama. From afar, the Armatanan enemy came, and he too sacked the Hatti lands. And he made Kizzuwadna, the city, his frontier. And Hattusa, the city, was burned down.[52]

The Tapikka letters may well foreshadow what was to come, providing us with striking contemporary evidence of the last years, perhaps even the last months, of the life of a Hittite settlement near the homeland’s northern frontier. They may also provide a microcosm of the situation throughout the entire Hittite homeland

in this period, shortly before Hatti succumbed to the enemy forces attacking it from all sides. As we have noted, the king who figures in the correspondence, Tudhaliya III, was forced to abandon his capital and set up a royal seat in exile. And there the court remained until, finally, thanks to the joint operations of Tudhaliya and his son Suppiluliuma, the Hittites won back their lost territories. With the accession of Suppiluliuma, Hatti entered upon an illustrious new phase in its history. Under Suppiluliuma's direction, it was to become, for more than a century, the most powerful kingdom in the Near Eastern world.

Letter from a field commander in Syria

One of the most interesting features of the letters from the Maşat, Ortaköy and Kuşakli archives is their sense of *immediacy*. At the time of writing, many of the events which the letters record were still *in medias res,* still in the process of taking place. Each archive provides us with contemporary, first-hand, day-to-day accounts of the life and the conditions experienced by the letter-writers in the Hittite homeland's regional administrative centres. Of equal interest, no doubt, were the letters dispatched by military commanders from frontier posts in remote parts of the Hittite realm. Unfortunately, the corpus of surviving military correspondence is very small. We know from a list of instructions issued by the Hittite Great King of the comprehensive range of duties and responsibilities imposed upon his commanders.[53] But letters written by the commanders themselves must have provided rather more graphic impressions of their day-to-day tasks, as well as the privations, the challenges and the dangers which often confronted them and their men in the kingdom's outlying regions.

In view of the meagre amount of such material available to us, the discovery in Ugarit in 1956 of a letter written by a field commander to his king understandably attracted much attention and interest.[54] The fragmentary document came to light in an archive of some 335 tablets of varying content unearthed in a large private residence owned by one of Ugarit's most important citizens and located not far from the palace.[55] The military officer who wrote (or dictated) the letter was a man called Sumi[—].[56] Unfortunately the king to whom it is addressed is not named, at least in the surviving portion of the letter. At the time of writing, Sumi[—] and his troops had already spent some five months on active duty in the field as frontline forces. Their task was to defend the strategically important frontier region in southern Amurru, between Mt Lebanon and the sea, against incursions by Egyptian forces.

Tensions in the region were high, for Egypt was determined to regain control of Amurrite territory which it had lost to Hatti when its local ruler Aziru had switched his allegiance to the Hittite king Suppiluliuma. Serving as a first line of defence, Sumi[—]'s men had fought off repeated attacks by the enemy. But the losses they had sustained in the process and the harsh winter conditions which they were experiencing were now taking a serious toll. Sumi[—] had already written several times to his king with requests for reinforcements and fresh

supplies. But apparently he had received no response. He now wrote again with added urgency: 'My Lord, what is my outlet from here? Now for five months the cold has been gnawing me, my chariots are broken, my horses are dead, and my troops are lost!'[57] In a series of night assaults the enemy had breached the Hittite defences, and they were repulsed only after fierce fighting within the defenders' fortress:

> My men were attacked over and over again in the middle of the night, and a battle was waged between them. My men drove them out, and heaped up their equipment and their property. It was within the fortress (itself) that they were fighting.

One of the enemy was taken prisoner, and under interrogation revealed a worrying piece of news: the pharaoh himself was preparing to come to the region. Almost certainly this meant a major Egyptian campaign was being planned, under the pharaoh's personal command. If so, then any attempted resistance by Sumi[—] with the forces at his disposal would be futile: 'Heaven forbid that the king of Egypt should arrive quickly; for we shall not be able to overpower him by force. Heaven forbid that the king of Egypt should come forth!' Sumi[—] could but hope that the report was false, or that the pharaoh would change his mind and send only an expeditionary force. With that he could deal—provided reinforcements in chariotry and infantry were sent to him: 'May the king assign troops and chariots, so that we can fight against them and overpower them by force.' A decisive showdown was the only way to ensure that 'once and for all my enemies will be annihilated'. Otherwise, 'if I do not fight with them, then be it known to my lord that every year they will come out here, that every day he (the pharaoh) will keep sending (troops) against us.'

Who was the recipient of this letter? While it is possible that he was a local Syrian ruler, vassal of the Hittite king, it is much more likely that he was the Great King of Hatti himself. The question is, which Great King?

Almost the entire archive in which the letter was found dates to the thirteenth century. This seemed to leave little doubt that the archive was contemporary with one or more of the early rulers of the Ramesside dynasty in Egypt. Historically such a date for Sumi[—]'s letter would fit well with the tensions between Hatti and Egypt over disputed frontier territories, tensions which erupted into conflict first between Seti I and Muwatalli[58] and subsequently between Muwatalli and Seti's son Ramesses II at Kadesh in 1274. However, on linguistic grounds it has been argued that the letter is out of its chronological context and should be dated to the Amarna period, and that at least one other text (a lexical text) from the archive may also date to this period.[59] If so, then the letter's addressee could well have been the Hittite Great King Suppiluliuma.[60] This would make it likely that the events to which it refers took place in the period immediately following Aziru's defection from Egypt to Hatti and the consequent transfer of Amurru's allegiance to the Hittites. We might then conclude that Akhenaten did in fact take

prompt action in an attempt to win back at least part of his lost territory—by ordering repeated attacks by his own locally based troops on the Hittites' newly established southern frontier as a prelude to a major campaign which he intended to lead in person. This would undoubtedly have meant full-scale war between Egypt and Hatti. But if such a campaign had in fact been intended, plans for it were aborted by the pharaoh's death.

Within this particular scenario the letter appears to indicate indifference on Suppiluliuma's part—or at least tardiness in responding—to the worsening plight of a field commander who had been given the task of guarding the frontier of a newly acquired subject state in the face of repeated enemy attacks. It was a frontier which the Hittites were apparently in imminent danger of losing. The failure of the letter's addressee to respond promptly and decisively to this situation is difficult to reconcile with what else we know of Suppiluliuma. All other sources indicate that he brought a high degree of dedication and single-mindedness to the task of acquiring his Syrian territories and maintaining his control over them. This is not the impression the letter gives. Perhaps Sumi[—] exaggerated his plight, the dangers confronting him, and the slowness of his overlord to respond—as did a number of Egypt's vassals in their letters to the pharaoh. On the other hand, Hatti's military resources had always to be carefully husbanded, and there may well have been occasions when the Great King was simply unable to respond promptly to requests by local commanders for reinforcements, no matter how urgent the requests may have been, if all available manpower was tied up in campaigns elsewhere in his kingdom.

The outcome of Sumi[-]'s letter, along with the events which followed upon it, remains unknown. But these are not the only uncertainties. While a very plausible case has been made for assigning the letter to the Amarna period, more precisely to the events following Aziru's defection to Hatti, and for identifying the addressee of the letter with the Hittite Great King Suppiluliuma, there are other possibilities. It has been suggested that the letter should be assigned to the period of the Hittite king Mursili II, son of Suppiluliuma, when the throne of Egypt was occupied by the pharaoh Horemheb.[61] Given the tensions and sporadic conflicts between Hatti and Egypt in this period (as indicated, for example, in Mursili's *Annals*) and the likelihood that Horemheb actually campaigned in the Syrian region, the suggestion from a historical point of view is not without merit. A further possibility is that the addressee of the letter was one of the Hittite viceroys in Syria, the first of whom were Suppiluliuma's sons.[62] The events referred to in Sumi[—]'s letter could conceivably have taken place after the establishment of the viceregal seats at Carchemish and Aleppo. If so, the responsibilities assumed by the viceroys in Syria on the Great King's behalf would make it logical that a local field commander's requests for reinforcements and supplies would in the first instance be addressed to one of them.[63]

Notes

1 This is clear from the fact that the majority of the correspondence found in the archives consisted of letters addressed to the Great King.
2 For a summary of the site and its finds, see Süel (2002).
3 For a summary of the site and its finds, see Müller-Karpe (2002).
4 On the identification, see Alp (1991a:42–3).
5 For a comprehensive general account of the letters, see Klinger (1995).
6 Two tablets discovered in the third level of the site bear seal impressions with the name of Tudhaliya, father of Suppiluliuma. See Alp (1991a:48–50, 109–12). The father—son relationship was proved by a *bulla* found in the (later) level II of the site bearing the impression 'Suppiluliuma, son of Tudhaliya' (Alp (1991a: Abb.3 and Tafel 3).
7 *HKM* 2:1–9.
8 According to Otten (1956; cited also by Beckman 1995:25, n. 38), Hittite bureaucrats' practice of addressing each other as 'my brother' or by a similar term of family relationship probably goes back to the days when they were school students together.
9 Thus Alp (1991a:71), who observes that from letter 71 we can conclude that he bore the title UGULA NIMGIR ERÍN.MEŠ, 'Chief Military Inspector'. See also Beckman (1995:23).
10 See Beal (1992:406–7).
11 *HKM* 3.
12 *HKM* 10:17–22.
13 *HKM* 102.
14 Hoffner (2002:68).
15 *HKM* 58:5–14, after Hoffner (2002:68–9).
16 *HKM* 59. Cf. Alp (1991a: 336).
17 Adapted from *HKM* 10:42–52.
18 See Bryce (2002:16–17).
19 *HKM* 48:31–2; *HKM* 49:4–5.
20 *HKM* 52. We shall discuss below the complaint lodged by Tarhunmiya against the local authorities in Tapikka.
21 *HKM* 3, referred to above.
22 Adapted from *HKM* 3:17 ff.
23 *HKM* 31:20–30.
24 *HKM* 53:20–3.
25 *HKM* 56:7–19. Alp (1991a:63) concludes that Himuili was back in Hattusa at the time since the same tablet contains a letter from the Hattusa-based scribe Tarhunmiya to Walwanu, a scribe in Tapikka.
26 *HKM* 58:29–31.
27 *HKM* 68.
28 Suggested by Alp (1991a:83).
29 *HKM* 55:30–3, trans. Beckman (1995:24).
30 *HKM* 74.
31 See Singer (2002:309–10), Freu (2002c:71–2).
32 *HKM* 52.

33 At least, in earlier versions of the Laws. The number of those who were exempt may have been considerably reduced in later versions.
34 Based upon *HKM* 52:25–39
35 See also HKM 27:17–25.
36 *HKM* 52:10–18, after Beckman (1995:26).
37 A man called Palluwa. On the possible identification of this man with a Hittite prince of that name, see Singer (1999:69–70).
38 It is possible that Zu-Ba'al presented his case in person before the Great King, though his appeal might just as well have been conveyed by a messenger. Cf. Singer (1999:68).
39 Probably the local Hittite commander (Singer 1999:68).
40 *MsK* 73. 1097=Laroche (1982: no. 1), transcribed and trans. by Singer (1999: 66–7). (The translation here is adapted from Singer's.) Cf. Laroche (1982:54).
41 Transcribed and trans. by Singer (1999:66–7).
42 Singer (1999:70). It should, however, be said that Zu-Ba'al was clearly a person of some eminence within Emar's religious establishment, as his title 'LÚ.HAL' indicates, as well as having an important role in the affairs of the city in general: see also Westenholz (2000:78–80).
43 *HKM* 30:1–10.
44 *HKM* 46:3–4.
45 *HKM* 17.
46 *HKM* 25:6–10.
47 *HKM* 50.
48 *HKM* 15.
49 *HKM* 16.
50 *HKM* 35.
51 *HKM* 20.
52 *KBo*VI 28 (*CTH* 88), obv. 6–15, adapted from trans. by Goetze (1940:21–2).
53 As illustrated by the instructions issued to the *BĒL MADGALTI;* see von Schuler (1957:41–59).
54 RS 20.33 (*Ugaritica* V, No. 20).
55 From the fact that two other letters in the archive are addressed to a man called Rapanu and another bears his signature, and from the lexicographical texts and other texts of an educative nature which the archive contains, the conclusion has been drawn that Rapanu was the owner of the house, that he was a scribe and otherwise a person of considerable distinction in the city (see Izre'el and Singer 1990:9).
56 The last part of his name is missing. For a review of suggestions as to how it might be completed, see Singer (1990:174–8).
57 This and the following passages from the letter are taken or adapted from the trans. by Izre'el in Izre'el and Singer (1990:23–7).
58 In a first battle at Kadesh, resulting in a victory for Seti; see Bryce (1998: 250–1).
59 Discussed at length by Izre'el (1990), with summary of conclusions (pp. 110–11).
60 For possible reasons why the letter, if addressed to Suppiluliuma, was actually located in a private residence in Ugarit, see Singer (1990:172–3). On the other, lexical, text which has been dated to no earlier than the first half of the thirteenth century, see Izre'el and Singer (1990:11) (with refs cited therein).
61 See Freu (2002a: 37).

62 This possibility is discussed by Singer (1990:171–2), who notes that the lesser title ‘king’ in the letter’s introductory formula is suggestive of a viceroy, as distinct from a ‘Great King’, who is normally either addressed as such or by the title ‘My Sun’. Because of other considerations, however, this is not Singer’s preferred option.

63 Most likely to the Carchemish viceroy Sharri-Kushuh, who seems to have had particular responsibility for the defence of the Hittite subject states in Syria; see Bryce (1998:203–4).

11
AN EXTRAORDINARY REQUEST

It is the year 1327. The scene is set before the walls of Carchemish on the west bank of the Euphrates. The once great Mitannian empire has disintegrated beneath the repeated onslaughts of the Hittite king Suppiluliuma. But Carchemish, its last stronghold, remains defiant. Suppiluliuma takes personal command of his troops for a final assault on the city's defences. In the midst of his preparations, he receives word that a messenger has come post-haste from Egypt with an urgent letter from the pharaoh's queen. Though immersed in plans for Carchemish's destruction, Suppiluliuma is curious to hear what the queen has to say. A scribe is hastily summoned to translate the letter from Akkadian. It begins with a simple statement: 'My husband is dead!' Then follows an extraordinary request. The king is dumb-founded at what the queen asks of him. 'Such a thing has never happened to me in all my life!' he exclaims. Amazement quickly turns to suspicion. 'Maybe they're deceiving me!' He summons a council of his leading men to discuss the matter. Can the queen be trusted? Is it a trick? A decision is made to investigate further. Suppiluliuma entrusts the task to his chamberlain Hattusa-ziti. 'Go to Egypt,' he instructs him, 'and bring me back the truth!'

The story of the royal widow's letter and the chain of events which followed upon it have provided us with one of the most famous episodes in the history of the ancient Near East—and one of the most controversial. The letter poses a number of questions—on whose answers scholars cannot yet agree. Who was its author, and who was her husband? When did her husband die? How long before his burial took place? Who was responsible for the episode's final tragic outcome? What were its long-term consequences? All the ingredients are here for an intriguing detective story—but one from which the last page has disappeared.

Our main source of information on the letter and its aftermath comes not from the Amarna archive, nor indeed from any Egyptian source. It is to be found in a passage from King Suppiluliuma's biography, composed by his son Mursili.[1] The letter's key words are cited by Mursili on a large, well-preserved fragment of the biography. They contain the appeal which had so flabbergasted its recipient:

> My husband is dead! I have no son. Yet I am told that you have many sons. If you would give me one of your sons, he would become my husband. Never shall I pick out a servant of mine and make him my husband![2]

We can readily sense the pride and determination in these words. But the queen is close to despair. Her husband has died without an heir. And with his death the royal line is at an end. The bereaved wife has no family left to whom she can turn. What is to become of her now? Her true feelings are betrayed in her letter's last reported words: 'I am afraid!'

The identity of the Egyptian queen

Who was this queen, widow of a recently dead pharaoh? The biography calls her 'Dahamunzu'. Unfortunately this is of no help in identifying her, as it is simply the Hittite way of writing the Egyptian title *'ta hemet nesu'*, which means 'the wife of the king'. All we can be sure about is that the letter was written in the final years of the famous Egyptian eighteenth dynasty. In fact we can narrow down the period to the last three kings of the dynasty—Akhenaten, Smenkhkare and Tutankhamun. One of these must have been the pharaoh whose death had provoked the letter. Each of these has his supporters amongst modern scholars.

But there are more specific clues. First, Suppiluliuma's biography does actually name the dead pharaoh, calling him, in Hittite cuneiform, Niphururiya or Nibhururiya. This is a Hittite representation of the pharaoh's *prenomen*, one of his official throne-names. Let us compare it with the *prenomen* of each of our three candidates: Akhenaten—Neferkheperure; Smenkhkare—Ankhkheprure; Tutankhamun—Nebkheperure. It is clear that Nip/bhururiya equates precisely with Tutankhamun's *prenomen*. Second, the crucial point of the widow's request is that her husband had died without leaving issue. The eighteenth dynasty had certainly been teetering on the verge of extinction at the time of Akhenaten's death. But he still had his co-regent Smenkhkare to succeed him, and also a potential successor in Tutankhamun, probably his son (though not by Nefertiti). It was only with Tutankhamun's death that the royal line had become totally defunct.

The pharaoh's widow left no doubt that she would not try to resurrect it by marrying a mere commoner! It needed a prince of the royal blood to restore authority to the throne of Egypt, albeit a prince of foreign blood. If we identify the dead pharaoh as Tutankhamun, then the Dahamunzu of the Hittite biography was Tutankhamun's wife Ankhesenamun, called Ankhesenpaaten during the Amarna period. She was the third eldest of the daughters of Akhenaten and Nefertiti, and perhaps her husband's half-sister. Some two or three years his senior, she had become a widow in her very early twenties. This, I believe, was the young woman whose letter had flabber-gasted the ruthless old warlord of Hatti.

Further arguments can be marshalled in support of this.[3] Nevertheless, a number of scholars are still not persuaded that Tutankhamun and Ankhesenamun have been correctly identified as the Egyptian royal couple in this famous episode.[4] And readers who wish to delve in more detail into the identity question should certainly make their own assessment of other proposals on offer. Nefertiti, Akhenaten's chief wife, and Meretaten, another of his daughters, have both been equated with Dahamunzu, and there are other possibilities as well—if the preferred candidate for the recently deceased pharaoh is either Akhenaten or Smenkhkare.

Yet I remain convinced that the widow who sent her marriage proposal to the Hittite king was Tutankhamun's widow Ankhesenpaaten/Ankhesenamun.[5] It is best to state this clearly now, for it will be the fundamental assumption in our investigation of the extraordinary sequence of events to which the letter gave rise.

The date of the Pharaoh's death

Of considerable importance for the whole debate is the question of timing. *When* did the pharaoh die? As we have noted, Suppiluliuma received news of his death as he was laying siege to Carchemish. By this time the military campaigning season was well advanced. We know from his biography that he took eight days to conquer Carchemish. He then spent some time in the city arranging for booty and prisoners of war to be transported back to the Hittite capital Hattusa. Then he installed his son Sharri-Kushuh as viceroy in Carchemish. And after that he returned to Hattusa—almost certainly arriving home by the end of October or early November, before the winter snows set in.

Let us work backwards from this date. The Hittite army's return journey, with carts laden with the spoils of battle, would have taken at least five or six weeks, thus giving a date around the end of September for its departure. Moving further backwards, we should allow about three weeks for the post-conquest arrangements in Carchemish—which would bring us to early September. It must have been about this time that the siege of Carchemish took place and Suppiluliuma received the letter from Egypt.

News of the pharaoh's death was brought by messenger from Egypt to Carchemish. A messenger travelling post-haste from Memphis, once again the royal capital, could have covered the journey in about two weeks. The pharaoh's death must have occurred only a short time before this. One of the main reasons for so concluding is that not long before the siege of Carchemish the Egyptians had carried out an attack on Kadesh, now Hittite subject territory. They would never have ventured on such a dangerous enterprise if their king had just died, particularly since in this case there was no one to succeed him. In such a crisis it is inconceivable that the Egyptians would have carried out a highly provocative act against a major foreign power greatly strengthened by its triumph over Mitanni and already hovering on the periphery of their Syrian subject territories.

Taking all these factors into consideration, we can say with some confidence that the pharaoh of our letter died in the month of July or August of the year 1327. But for most Egyptologists this would present a major problem if the pharaoh was Tutankhamun. The reason has to do with the botanical evidence found in his tomb. As the tomb's discoverer Howard Carter reported:

> From the blossoms and fruits found in these wreaths (i.e. the wreaths in the tomb), it is possible to indicate the season of the year at which King Tutankhamun was laid to rest in his tomb. The cornflower flowers at about the harvest time in March or April, and it is just at this time that the mandrake and the woody nightshade fruits ripen. The small Picris also flowers in March and April. Although the water-lily blossoms in the ditches and stagnant pools of Lower Egypt from July to November, it is very probable that being cultivated in garden tanks at Thebes it would flower much earlier in the year. We may therefore safely say that the season of the year when Tutankhamun was interred was from the middle of March to the end of April.[6]

Using this data, Egyptologists have concluded that Tutankhamun died in December or January. There is no actual evidence for this in any Egyptian sources. It is purely a matter of inference based on what we know of standard Egyptian burial practice. In accordance with this practice, the body should have been entombed precisely seventy days after death, neither a day more nor a day less, with all preparations for burial taking place in the intervening period;[7] hence the assumption of a December or January date of death, working backwards from the botanical material deposited in the tomb at the time of burial. The assumption is a perfectly reasonable one, since in the entire history of pharaonic Egypt there is only one clearly attested instance of a royal burial where the seventy-day interval was *not* observed—and that was way back in the fourth dynasty.[8] Thus if we identify our pharaoh as Tutankhamun, and date his death to the July or August preceding his entombment, we would have to allow an interval of *at least seven months* between death and burial! Such a break with tradition would have been inconceivable—unless it had been brought about by the most exceptional circumstances.

The exceptional circumstances

Circumstances of an exceptional nature might well have applied to Egypt following Tutankhamun's death. Whatever the cause of his death,[9] the pharaoh's sudden and unexpected passing, when he was still only in his late teens, plunged his kingdom into crisis. He had produced no heir. There was no one to succeed him on Egypt's throne, not even a child as he himself had been at the time of his accession. Without a strong central monarchy, and still recovering from the effects of the Amarna period, Egypt could well have become weak and divided once

more, and once more prey to foreigners, as it had been in those dark days before the emergence of the eighteenth dynasty. Already tensions between Hatti and Egypt were running high. Would Egypt again succumb to invaders from the north?

Upon such matters as these the young queen must have pondered. Such may have been the considerations which prompted her to embark on a radical course of action—even at the expense of long-standing Egyptian tradition—as a last-ditch effort to restore stability to the throne and to her kingdom, and in an attempt to bring about a lasting alliance with the great northern power which presented her kingdom with its most formidable external threat.

Yet the break with tradition need not have been so great. If Suppiluliuma had responded positively and promptly to the queen's request, there would have been time—within the seventy-day period—for a Hittite prince to get to Egypt, cutting short the protracted negotiations and the formalities which often featured in international royal marriages, ascend the throne and perform the final burial rites for his predecessor. It was essential that this ritual act be carried out by the new king. If under normal circumstances the performance of burial rites for one's predecessor was an important part of the legitimation of a new king's accession, even greater significance must have attached to it in the situation where the throne was to be occupied by a foreigner. The queen must fervently have hoped for a favourable response, with an absolute minimum of delay. The timing would have been tight, but the situation did, after all, call for the utmost haste.

Suppiluliuma was in a quandary. The offer being made to him was an extremely enticing one. Before him was the prospect of immeasurably increasing his power and influence throughout the Near Eastern world, by having his son installed on the throne of Egypt, without a single drop of Hittite blood being spilt. Marriages between the royal houses of brother-kings were common enough. The difference here was that Tutankhamun's widow was not merely proposing a marriage-alliance. She was actually offering Suppiluliuma's son the kingship of Egypt! Together, Suppiluliuma and his son would preside over the two most powerful kingdoms in the Near Eastern world. Why, then, was Suppiluliuma so suspicious of the offer?

We need to backtrack a little to answer this question. During Akhenaten's reign a semblance of friendship had been maintained between Egypt and Hatti, though the latter had remained an ever-present threat to Egyptian interests in Syria, and had in fact acquired several Egyptian subject territories in the region through the defection to Suppiluliuma of their local rulers. The small but strategically important kingdom of Kadesh was one of these territories. We have noted the possibility that Akhenaten was preparing for a major campaign into Syria, very likely with a view to regaining his lost territories. But any such preparations were abruptly ended by his death. The 'peace' with Hatti continued into the reign of Tutankhamun. Then, as Suppiluliuma was conducting his final mopping-up operations against the remnants of the Mitannian empire, he received alarming news: an Egyptian expeditionary force had launched an attack

on Kadesh. Suppiluliuma saw this as a blatant act of aggression—and responded promptly. He dispatched an expeditionary force of his own to Kadesh, which drove the Egyptians out of the kingdom and followed up its success with a retaliatory attack on Egyptian territory in southern Syria. The kingdoms were now on a war footing.

Almost certainly, the Egyptian attack was ordered by Tutankhamun, perhaps at the prompting of his advisers. But it was quixotic in the extreme. It may be that the adolescent pharaoh's position in his own kingdom had become increasingly insecure, and that what he needed above all else was a significant military success to demonstrate that he too was a 'Smiter of Asiatics' in the tradition of his most illustrious predecessors. To bloody the nose of the mighty Suppiluliuma would be a feat worth emblazoning on the walls of his country's temples! But the Egyptian attack on Kadesh had ended in disaster. It was a desperate gamble which failed to pay off, and shortly afterwards the pharaoh was dead. Whether or not the two cvents were connected is impossible to determine.

Nonetheless, Egypt had in effect declared war on Hatti—and yet within a short time the widow of the man responsible for this was seeking to unite the countries through a marriage-alliance. Suppiluliuma's suspicions were understandable. In his view the attack on Kadesh had been an act of outright treachery. Could he now risk putting his son into the hands of the perpetrators of this act? Moreover, even if he were prepared to accept that the young queen's request was sincere, could he be sure that she had the authority to make good on her promise—to put a Hittite prince on her country's throne? Suppiluliuma knew that there was likely to be considerable opposition in Egypt to such radical action. And the very fact that the queen's proposal was clearly a last desperate attempt to shore up her almost extinct dynasty could not have inspired much confidence in her ability to impose her will upon her subjects. A thorough investigation was called for by one of the king's highest-ranking and most trusted officials. Hence Hattusa-ziti was dispatched to the Land of the Nile.

The visit to Egypt and its outcome

In Egypt Ankhesenamun anxiously awaited a response from Hatti. Finally news came. A delegation had arrived from the Great King. But there was no prince with it—only a royal functionary sent to check her story out! The young widow's reaction was no doubt one of anger and frustration. There was now no chance that her husband's successor, if a Hittite prince, could perform the burial rights for his predecessor within the prescribed seventy-day period. Even so, the Hittite envoy must have conveyed to Her Majesty a positive if qualified message from his overlord. Yes, His Majesty is interested in your proposition. But he needs to be assured of the truth of what you say, and that his son will be in no danger if he comes to Egypt. In accordance with stand ard diplomatic practice, this message must have been conveyed to the queen in a letter from Suppiluliuma, delivered

by Hattusa-ziti and backed up by a statement which he delivered verbally on behalf of his king.

It was now Ankhesenamun who was in a quandary. Hattusa-ziti had plenty of time to carry out his investigations, for he could not return home until the following spring—some months hence. Thus, even if Suppiluliuma finally agreed to her request it would still be many months before the son he had selected as her bridegroom could arrive in Egypt. Could she afford to wait so long—to allow the crisis caused by her husband's death to continue unresolved? The longer the delay, the more opportunities there would be for her opponents to thwart her plans and the greater the risk to her own person. These were matters over which, no doubt, she agonized during the Hittite envoy's stay in Egypt.

But on one point her determination remained unshaken: 'Never shall I pick out a servant of mine and make him my husband!' To avoid marrying a commoner from amongst her own people she was willing to risk all. It was now crucial for her, and for the stability of her kingdom, that Suppiluliuma should finally agree to her request and send a Hittite prince to Egypt.

The following spring, as the winter snows thawed, Hattusa-ziti returned home. He was accompanied by Egypt's most distinguished diplomat, Ambassador Hani, whom we have met on several occasions in the Amarna letters. Granted audience with the Hittite king in the Great Hall of the royal palace in Hattusa, Hani handed to him another letter from the queen. As a translation from the Akkadian was being prepared, Suppiluliuma received a report from his own envoy about the outcome of his mission. He was therefore ready for the queen's angry outburst in the letter brought by Hani:

> Why did you say 'they deceive me' in that way? Had I a son, would I have written about my own and my country's shame to a foreign land? You did not believe me, and you even spoke thus to me! He who was my husband is dead. I have no son! Never shall I take a servant of mine and make him my husband! I have written to no other country. Only to you I have written. They say you have many sons; so give me one son of yours. To me he will be husband. In Egypt he will be king![10]

This extract from Ankhesenamun's second letter to Suppiluliuma is quoted by Mursili in his father's biography. In fact we have fragments of the queen's original letter, enough to demonstrate how faithfully Mursili's quotation reflects her actual words. In the letter itself Ankhesenamun referred to the death of her husband and emphasized that there were no sons to succeed him. She also took Suppiluliuma to task for doubting her word and sending his envoy Hattusa-ziti to Egypt for independent verification.[11] (Clearly Mursili had ordered the letter to be retrieved from the relevant state archive, and he and his scribes had it quite literally before them as he set about composing this section of the biography.)

Suppiluliuma was in no mood to accept the rebuke. The Egyptian attack on Kadesh still rankled with him, as he made clear in his response. Had he not good

reason to suspect Egyptian intentions? Had not Egyptian forces recently made a treacherous, unprovoked attack on one of his cities? Why should he trust Egypt now?

> I myself was friendly to you. But you, you suddenly did me evil. You came and attacked my land Kadesh. And when I heard this, I sent forth my own troops and chariots and the lords. So they came and attacked your territory, the country of Amka. And when they attacked Amka, you were probably afraid. And therefore you keep asking for a son of mine, as if it were my duty. He will in some way become a hostage. You will not make him king![12]

The signs for a successful, mutually acceptable outcome to the whole affair looked decidedly unfavourable. But then Hani brought his special diplomatic skills to bear:

> Oh my Lord! This is our country's shame! If we had a son of the king at all, would we have come to a foreign country and kept asking for a lord for ourselves? Niphururiya who was our lord is dead. He has no son. His wife is solitary. We are seeking a son of yours for the kingship in Egypt. And for the woman, our Lady, we seek him as her husband! Furthermore, we went to no other country. Only here did we come. Now, oh our Lord, give us a son of yours.[13]

This conciliatory speech, backed up no doubt by a reassuring report from the Hittite envoy, was enough to win Suppiluliuma over. In his biography Mursili sought to belittle the queen's diplomatic achievement by attributing to his father a thoroughly patronizing motive in finally giving way to her: 'Since my father was kind-hearted, he complied with the word of the woman, and concerned himself with the matter of supplying her with one of his sons.' Chivalry and kind-heartedness are totally out of character with what else we know of Suppiluliuma, and his son's statement gives no recognition at all to the dignity and courage and persistence of the royal widow. Suppiluliuma's reasons for 'complying with the word of the woman' were entirely self-intere sted, as they had been right from the start. The prospect for this ruthless, ambitious warrior-king, fresh from his triumph over Mitanni, of gaining de facto dominion over Egypt as well as the remnants of the Mitannian empire was clearly the overwhelmingly important factor in his decision to send one of his sons to Egypt.

The Zannanza mystery

Which son? Suppiluliuma had five of them. But the three eldest were already committed—Arnuwanda was crown prince, heir to the Hittite throne, Telipinu and Sharri-Kushuh were the viceroys in Aleppo and Carchemish, respectively.

The fifth son, Mursili, was still only a child. That left only Zannanza, son number four. It was Zannanza who was now promptly packed off to Egypt.

Suppiluliuma awaited reports of his son's progress. News finally came, in a dispatch brought back by a royal messenger. It was the worst possible news. Zannanza was dead. Most frustratingly, the passage in the biography which reports his death is very fragmentary. We learn that the prince was killed on his way to Egypt, but the text is broken at this point, obscuring the identity of his alleged killers. Nonetheless a distraught Suppiluliuma held the people of Egypt directly responsible: 'Oh Gods! I did no evil, but the people of Egypt did this to me!'[14]

Vengeance was inevitable. For Egypt the threat of all-out war added a further dimension to the succession crisis. The appointment of a successor to the dead pharaoh could no longer be delayed. Hastily the burial rites were completed, the paint on some of the tomb scenes scarcely dry. One of these scenes depicts the man who actually did succeed Tutankhamun. Dressed in priestly garb, it was he who undertook the elaborate ritual of Opening the Mouth, the ritual which restored the deceased to life in the next world and established the legitimacy of the man who performed it as his successor. The name of this person is Ay. He was not himself of royal blood but may have been related by marriage to the royal family. It has been suggested that he was the father of Akhenaten's wife Nefertiti. In any case, he had long been a powerful figure in the Egyptian court, serving as one of Akhenaten's closest and most trusted advisers, and continuing to play an influential role in court circles throughout Tutankhamun's reign. Now an old man, perhaps in his seventies, he became pharaoh by default, the man who assumed the mantle of kingship when there was no one else.

Suspicion inevitably falls upon Ay as the man responsible for the Hittite prince's death. It is very tempting to construct a melodramatic picture of this powerful court adviser, one which portrays him as a sinister *eminence grise* constantly lurking in the background, pledging unqualified allegiance to his overlord while nurturing designs of his own on the throne. Within this scenario the death of Tutankhamun paved the way for him to realise his ambition, only to have his plans dashed by the royal widow's rejection of him and by her quest for a young Hittite prince. Does her emphatic, repeated assertion that she will not marry a commoner spring from a specific approach already made to her by such a one as Ay? Romantically attractive as this scenario may be, there is absolutely no evidence that Ay played a sinister role in the course of events or, more specifically, had anything to do with the Hittite prince's death. As in all good detective stories, the obvious suspect was almost certainly not the culprit.

This is largely a matter of logic and common sense. Let us for a moment suppose that Ay did have designs on the Egyptian throne after Tutankhamun's death. If so, he would surely have made his intentions clear while Hattusa-ziti was in Egypt. One of Suppiluliuma's chief concerns was to ensure that his son, if sent to Egypt, would not be at risk from rival claimants to the throne. The best time to sabotage the proposed marriage-alliance with Hatti was while the Hittite

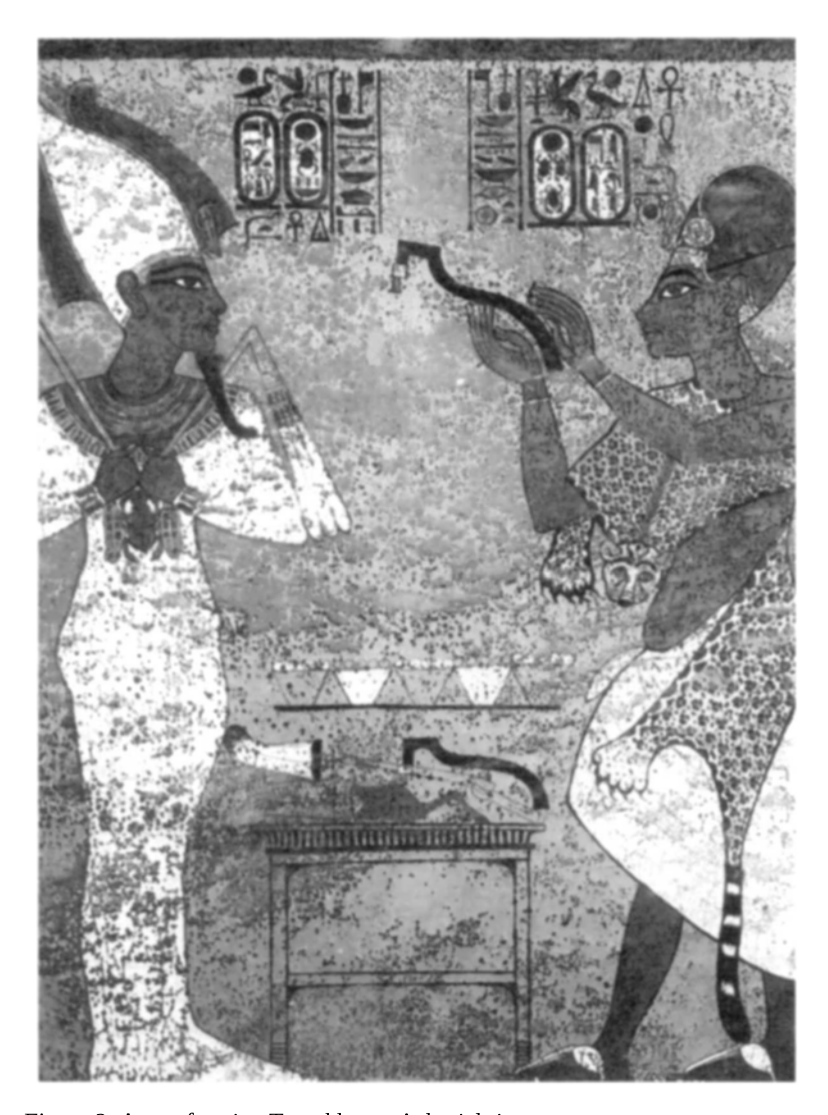


Figure 2: Ay performing Tutankhamun's burial rites

envoy was still in Egypt carrying out his investigations. This would have been the time for Ay to make his move, ensuring that the report received by Suppiluliuma would end all possible thought of a marriage-alliance. Ay had nothing to gain—and a great deal to lose—in delaying a bid for his kingdom's throne until Suppiluliuma had committed himself to the alliance. The likelihood is that Ay had never entertained ambitions of becoming pharaoh, and that his elevation to kingship was a hasty, eleventh-hour arrangement made only after news reached Egypt of Zannanza's death.

There is in any case no doubt that after becoming pharaoh Ay earnestly sought to make peace with Suppiluliuma, and that he denied emphatically that he had anything to do with his son's death. He wrote once, perhaps several times, to Suppiluliuma in his attempts to dissuade him from war. We know this from a now very fragmentary letter sent by Suppiluliuma in reply. The Hittite letter quotes passages from Ay's letter(s): 'Your accusations have no justification… You are simply spoiling for a fight against me…I seek peace and brotherhood with you. As for your son's death—of that I am entirely innocent!'[15] But there was no appeasing Suppiluliuma. On his orders, a Hittite army crossed the Egyptian frontiers in southern Syria and launched a vigorous attack on the cities in the region. Many thousands of prisoners of war were taken and transported back to the Hittite homeland. The sequel to this has an ironic twist. The prisoners brought with them a plague, which for the next twenty years ravaged Hatti and decimated its population.

Even today the death of the Hittite prince remains a mystery. Did he fall victim to forces in Egypt determined to prevent their country's throne being occupied by a foreigner? Was there a faction amongst his own countrymen ready to use any means to ensure that there would be no alliance with Egypt? Was he killed in an ambush by hostile tribesmen in southern Syria? Was he the victim of a conspiracy as yet unrevealed? These and many other suggestions have been made from time to time. We can do no more than speculate—until new evidence comes to light.

The unfortunate turn of events which resulted in the prince's death has left us with one of the intriguing 'what ifs' of history. What if Zannanza had safely reached Egypt, married Ankhesenamun and occupied her country's throne? Would this marriage have produced an invincible union between the Near Eastern world's two most powerful kingdoms? Would the course of history have been changed? Probably not. Whatever the causes of the prince's death, there were undoubtedly powerful forces in Egypt opposed to the alliance. And we must not forget that the young queen's bid for a Hittite prince as husband was no more than a last desperate ploy by the last survivor of a dynasty already in its death throes. The proposed marriage-alliance was almost certainly doomed from the outset.

What of the fate of Ankhesenamun? Was she finally forced to marry a commoner—perhaps her grandfather (if Ay was the father of Nefertiti) on his accession to the throne? After the aborted marriage alliance with Hatti, the rest of the young queen's life is almost totally lost to us. There is but one tiny piece of information. In 1931 an English archaeologist, Percy Newberry, was shown an ancient ring by a Cairo antique dealer. On its glass bezel were two cartouches, side by side. One contained *the prenomen* of Ay, the other the name of Ankhesenamun. Some form of union had taken place—probably, though not certainly, a marriage union. In the end Ankhesenamun may have been forced to accept a fate which she claimed she never would ('Never shall I marry a servant of mine!'), before disappearing forever from our records.

Notes

1 Ed. Güterbock (1956), cited as DS. All the passages in this chapter quoted from the biography are taken or adapted from Güterbock's translation.
2 *DS,* p. 94, frag. 28, A iii 11–15.
3 See Bryce (1990).
4 The case for identifying Niphururiya with Akhenaten has been presented at some length by Krauss (1978: esp. 9–19), and recently argued afresh, e.g. by Helck (1994:16–22), Reeves (2001:176–7).
5 Note that Kitchen (1998:253, n. 137) emphatically reasserts the identity of Niphururiya with Tutankhamun. Cf. van den Hout (1994:85).
6 Carter and Mace (1927:196).
7 So too the Greek historian Herodotos reported, many centuries later, in his account of Egyptian embalming procedures (2.86).
8 A period of 272 days elapsed between the death and burial of the fourth dynasty queen Meresankh (III); *Urk* 1, 156–7 (98).
9 We have no evidence that foul play was involved, despite a great deal of speculation to this effect.
10 *DS,* pp. 96–7, frag.28, A iii 50-A iv 12.
11 *ÄHK* 1:14–15.
12 *DS,* pp. 97, frag. 28, E3 iv 8–12.
13 *DS,* pp. pp. 97–8, frag. 28, A iv 13–15.
14 *DS,* pp. 108, frag. 31, 7'-11'.
15 *KUB* XIX 20 (*CTH* 154), ed. Hagenbuchner (1989: no. 208, pp. 304–9). For a suggested reconstruction of the letter's contents, see Murnane (1990:25–7).

12
LETTER TO A MYCENAEAN KING

Mycenaean contacts with the Near East

The Near Eastern world provided markets and outlets for a wide range of goods produced in the lands lapped by the waters of the Aegean Sea. Merchant vessels sailing the eastern Mediterranean carried the products of Minoan Crete and Mycenaean Greece to all the major ports and trading emporia of the Mediterranean coastlands, whence many goods of Aegean origin were conveyed along caravan routes and waterways to palaces, market-places and homes of the affluent in Mesopotamia, Anatolia and Egypt. In a world highly attuned to the benefits of international commerce and cultural exchange, it is hard to imagine a royal family, or indeed any family of wealth and substance, who could not boast possession of exquisite items of Aegean manufacture, who had not sampled the delights of the wines produced in Homer's rich and lovely land called Crete. Indeed, tomb paintings from New Kingdom Egypt depict Aegean gift-bearing visitors to the pharaoh's court, almost certainly members of trade delegations. But, beyond these commercial exchanges, the links between the Near Eastern kingdoms and the Aegean and mamland Greek civilizations were tenuous. From a strategic or political point of view, the lands in or across the wine-dark sea were of little interest or significance to the Great Kings, and except in a very few cases rate not even a passing reference in their written records. Militarily, no Great King had the resources to impose his control over them—nor was there any compelling motive for him to try to do so. Strategically, diplomatic alliances with them could serve no practical purpose.

With one notable exception.

The scattering of small islands in the Aegean Sea put the western coast of Anatolia within easy reach of island-hopping sea-travellers from Crete and mainland Greece in search of new markets, new places to settle. Around the beginning of the sixteenth century Minoan immigrants had established a colony at Miletos, called Milawata/Millawanda in Hittite texts.[1] From the late fifteenth century onwards, there was increasing Mycenaean interest in western Anatolia, with Mycenaean trade and settlement in the Halikarnassos peninsula, Iasos, Miletos, Ephesos, Klazomenai, Smyrna and the Larissa area.[2] Evidence for this

is most marked at Miletos (we shall henceforth use its Hittite name Milawata), where there was undoubtedly substantial Mycenaean settlement from *circa* 1400.[3] Inevitably, Mycenaean interests in the region clashed with Hittite interests, for by 1400 Hittite subject territory extended through much of western Anatolia, and during the course of the fourteenth century (if not earlier) Milawata itself had been claimed as a Hittite possession. We know this from information provided in Hittite texts. What information do we have from written records about Mycenaean involvement in western Anatolian affairs?

The Ahhiyawa question

In the 1920s, the Swiss scholar Emil Forrer announced to the world of Hittite scholarship that he had found Mycenaean Greeks in the Hittite texts. He supported his claim by drawing attention to a number of references in these texts to a land called Ahhiyawa and a king of Ahhiyawa. The name appeared also in a shorter early form, Ahhiya. It was, Forrer maintained, the Hittite equivalent of the Greek *Achaia*, and he noted that in Homer's epics the Greeks are invariably referred to by the generic term *Achaioi*. The identification gave rise to considerable controversy, with sceptics, notably the German scholar Ferdinand Sommer, dismissing the name-similarity as mere coincidence; the whole case amounted to no more than kling-klang etymology. But in recent years scholarly opinion has swung increasingly behind Forrer's hypothesis, and every new piece of evidence lends further support to it. Admittedly the identification still remains a circumstantial one, but the case in favour of it must now be regarded as overwhelming.[4]

From the historian's point of view, it is difficult to overestimate the import ance of the identification. It serves as an invaluable complement to the archaeological record, for it gives us the only written information we have on the *history* of the Mycenaean world, or at least a part of this world. Further, it provides clear evidence that Mycenaean interest in western Anatolia went beyond mere trading contacts. There were Mycenaean kings who also became politically and militarily involved in the activities of the region. This is evident at least as early as the 1320s,[5] the first years of the Hittite king Mursili II's reign, when a Hittite rebel vassal sought to ally himself with the king of Ahhiyawa.[6] However, we shall be concentrating here on a later period, the mid-thirteenth century, when the Hittite throne was occupied by Hattusili III. In the course of his reign Hattusili had cause to write a letter of complaint to the king of Ahhiyawa. The letter originally extended over three tablets, of which unfortunately only the last has survived. It is commonly referred to as the Tawagalawa letter.[7] As we shall see, this is a misleading name, but it is in such common use that we shall retain it here. Both the author and the addressee of the letter must have been named in the lost first tablet. While we can deduce that the author was Hattusili,[8] the identity of the Ahhiyawan king to whom the letter was addressed remains

unknown. But the period of composition and a passing reference in the surviving portion of the letter give rise to an intriguing possibility.

Let us set the scene. To do this, we should begin by attempting to define the extent and the limits of the term Ahhiyawa, as applied to the Mycenaean Greek world. In very broad terms, Mycenaean civilization covered the period from the seventeenth to the twelfth centuries, defined archaeologically as the Late Helladic period. It was thus roughly co-extensive with the lifespan of the Hattusa-based kingdom of Hatti, Kassite Babylon and the Egyptian eighteenth and nineteenth dynasties. The name 'Mycenaean' is used today as a term of convenience for the whole of the Late Helladic civilization. It reflects Mycenae's prominence within this civilization, in the archaeological record as well as in Greek literary tradition. Current thinking about the Mycenaean world, encompassing both mainland Greece and the Greek islands, is that, while it displayed a high degree of cultural homogeneity, it was a politically fragmented world, consisting of many independent kingdoms subject to their own local rulers. There was, however, a hierarchy of these kingdoms, in terms of their size, wealth and power. Mycenae, Tiryns, Argos and Pylos were amongst the most important centres of the Mycenaean world. Though they were politically and administratively independent of each other, it is possible that the various kingdoms formed temporary alliances for military purposes or for other major enterprises, much as Homer depicts them in the *Iliad*.

How do Hittite textual references to Ahhiyawa square with this? The number of these references is quite small (around twenty or so), and they often occur in very fragmentary passages. But as far as we can judge from them, it seems that in some contexts the name was used in a purely generic sense to refer to the contemporary Greek world in general, just as the Hittites used the term *Hurri* as a general designation for the Hurrian-speaking world, including the kingdom of Mitanni. On the other hand, the name might also have been used of a specific Greek kingdom, especially when reference was made to a particular king of Ahhiyawa. In this case, the king in question was almost certainly the ruler of one of the major kingdoms, perhaps Mycenae itself. But even the major Mycenaean kingdoms were of very modest size when compared with the Great Kingdoms of their Near Eastern contemporanes. Nonetheless it is possible that the Hittites thought of the kings of Ahhiyawa as exercising in their own world power commensurate with that of their royal brothers in the Near East.

The activities of Piyamaradu

This brings us to our letter—which might be more aptly named the 'Piyamaradu letter'. The circumstances which it outlines are these: for many years a renegade Hittite subject called Piyamaradu had been raiding Hittite territory in western Anatolia and stirring up insurrection against the Hittite king. Although earlier Hittite campaigns had curbed his activities in the region, he still remained at large and continued to harass Hittite subject territories and their inhabitants.

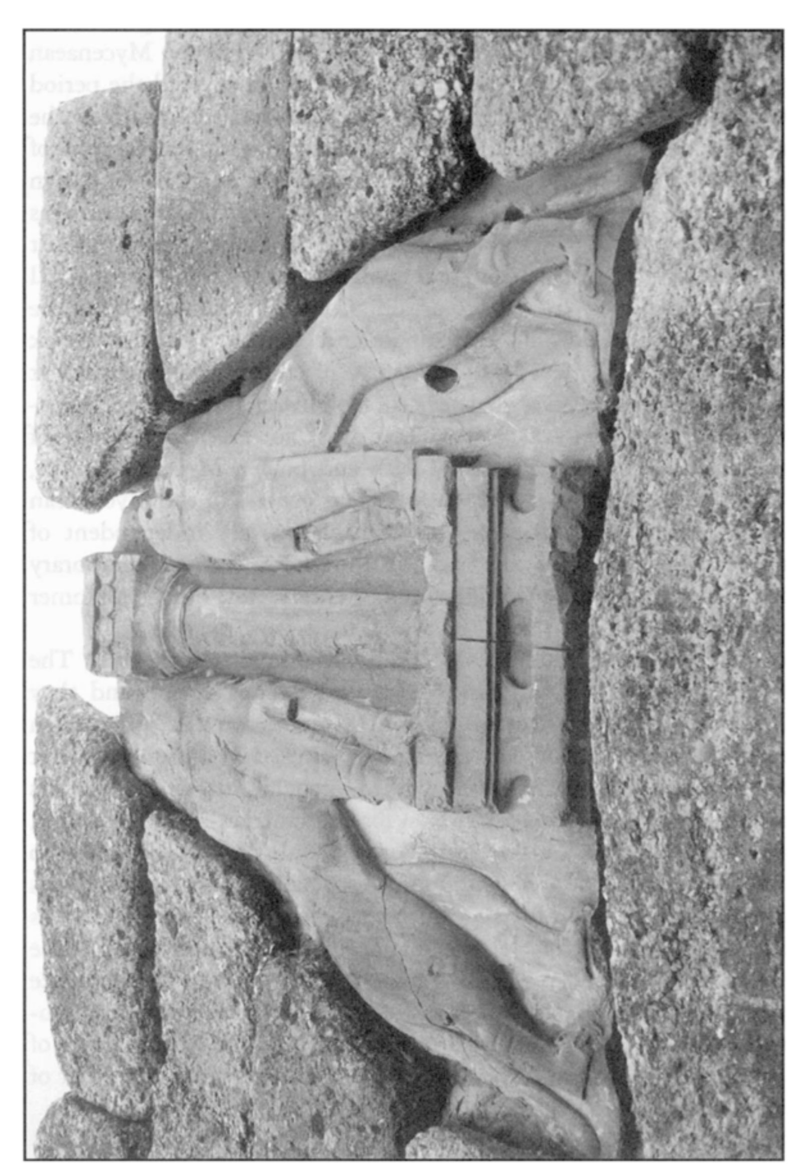


Figure 3: The Lion Gate at Mycenae

What made the situation all the more serious was the fact that he was acting with the support or at least the connivance of the Ahhiyawan king. Word reached Hattusili that the latter's brother Tawagalawa had arrived in Milawata, apparently with the intention of taking back to the Greek mainland thousands of Hittite subjects: some were going voluntarily; others were apparently being taken

against their will. Almost certainly, the Ahhiyawan king was looking for recruits to swell his labour force for the large construction projects which the fortification of the Mycenaean citadels entailed, for it was precisely in this period that massive new building enterprises were being undertaken on the Greek mainland. Piyamaradu was apparently acting as the Mycenaean king's local recruiting or pressgang agent.

Generally Hittite kings preferred to assign to deputies the command of military campaigns in the west. But in this case the crisis precipitated by Piyamaradu's activities was considered serious enough to warrant the intervention of the king himself. Piyamaradu had long been a thorn in the Hittite side. It was time for a final reckoning. But even while Hattusili was on the march against his enemy, he left the door open for a peaceful resolution. All would be forgiven if, even at this late stage, Piyamaradu showed a willingness to resubmit to Hittite overlordship. This he was apparently prepared to do, as Hattusili informed the Ahhiyawan king: 'Now when I came to Sallapa,'[9] he wrote, 'Piyamaradu sent a man to meet me, saying: "Take me into vassalage and send me the *tuhkanti* (i.e. the crown prince), and he will conduct me to Your Majesty"'[10] A diplomatic solution was in sight! Hattusili sent an official called the *tartenu* to escort Piyamaradu into his presence.[11] But when the king's representative arrived Piyamaradu snubbed him. He then increased the stakes, insisting upon an immediate appointment: 'Give me a kingdom here on the spot!' he demanded. 'Otherwise I will not come!'

Hattusili responded with an ultimatum demanding that Piyamaradu withdraw all his forces from the fortified stronghold Iyalanda, perhaps the later city of Alinda, which lay some 60 kilometres due east of Miletos/Milawata: 'If you desire my overlordship,' he wrote to him, 'see now, when I come to Iyalanda, let me not find any of your men in Iyalanda; and you shall not let anyone go back there, and you shall not trespass in my domain.' The ultimatum was ignored. On approaching the stronghold, Hattusili's forces came under heavy enemy attack. Iyalanda eventually fell to the Hittites, but only after an extensive military operation, which prevented the king from pursuing his major objective—the reclaiming of his subjects abducted by Piyamaradu.

Meanwhile, Piyamaradu had escaped and found refuge in Milawata, which at that time was subject to the Ahhiyawan king.[12] Hattusili again wrote to Piyamaradu, demanding that he give himself up. Fully confident that he had Ahhiyawan protection, Piyamaradu refused. Hattusili wrote also to the Ahhiyawan king, with a complaint that stopped just short of accusing him of supporting Piyamaradu's attacks on Hittite territory: The fact that Piyamaradu is making repeated attacks on this land—does my brother know this, or does he not know it?' The question is rhetorical. How could the Ahhiyawan king *not* know it? The response he sent back to Hattusili was very curt, abrupt to the point of rudeness, without any of the usual diplomatic courtesies: 'When your messenger arrived at my quarters, he brought me no greeting, and he brought me no present/ complained Hattusili. Such a thing was unheard of in the world of Near Eastern diplomacy! But the message itself was what Hattusili wanted to hear. The

Ahhiyawan king had written to Atpa, his appointed deputy in Milawata (and also, as it happened, Piyamaradu's father-in-law) with the order: 'Put Piyamaradu at the disposal of the king of Hatti.'

That in effect gave Hattusili the permission he needed to enter Milawata. To march into it without this permission would have been tantamount to an act of war, since Milawata now belonged to Ahhiyawa. Hattusili had no desire at this point to provoke hostilities with his royal brother. But now, with his consent, he could lead his troops into the city and take Piyamaradu into custody. The renegade's capture would serve as an object lesson for all to heed. It would be a timely warning to Milawata's inhabitants that no one who attacked Hittite territory and Hittite subjects was beyond the reach of Hittite justice. The words that I shall speak to Piyamaradu, the subjects of my brother shall also hear them!' Hattusili proclaimed. But unfortunately for him things did not go according to plan. His march into Milawata ended in humiliation. Piyamaradu was no longer there! He had escaped by ship. There could be no doubt that his escape had been engineered by the Ahhiyawan king's own people, for he subsequently turned up in Ahhiyawan territory, probably back in mainland Greece. There he was quite safe from Hittite authority—but still free to return to Anatolia and continue his attacks on Hittite territory whenever the opportunity presented itself.

But the crowning humiliation for Hattusili was his total failure to prevent the removal to Ahhiyawan territory of the thousands of his subjects whom Piyamaradu had rounded up. The Hittite expedition had been a disastrous failure. Hattusili had suffered no defeats, at least no major defeats, in the field of battle, but he had shown just as clearly how fragile and vulnerable Hittite authority was in the region. It was not merely Piyamaradu he had to worry about. He now had to face the prospect of his Ahhiyawan counterpart, emboldened by the recent turn of events, seriously contesting with him control of the entire western Anatolian region. If in fact such a contest was already underway, the first round had gone very decidedly to the Ahhiyawan and those whom he supported.

Hattusili's peace initiatives

Where force had failed, diplomacy might prevail. Hattusili now assumed the role of negotiator and compromiser. The chief purpose of his letter finally becomes clear. To be sure, it is primarily a letter of complaint, with Hattusili adopting the role of the aggrieved party. Denys Page's wonderfully descriptive phrase about the Hittite king 'bleating in cuneiform across the wine-dark sea'[13] captures something of the letter's essence. But its overall tone is conciliatory. The king was anxious for a diplomatic solution to the impasse with Ahhiyawa and sought his Ahhiyawan counterpart's co-operation in restoring stability to the region—above all, by keeping the lid on Piyamaradu!

There was also the question of the abducted Hittite subjects. Even though their abduction was by now well and truly a *fait accompli,* Hattusili wanted them back

—at least some of them. He suggested a compromise. Those who went voluntarily should be allowed to remain in Ahhiyawa. Those who were taken by force should be returned to Hittite territory.

But the main issue was what to do about Piyamaradu. Rumour had it that he intended to return to Anatolia, and presumably continue with his anti-Hittite activities. Hattusili called upon the Ahhiyawan king to declare where he stood on this:

> According to this rumour, during the time when Piyamaradu leaves behind his wife, children and household in my brother's land, your land is affording him protection. But he is continually raiding my land; and whenever I have prevented him in that, he comes back into your territory. Are you now, my brother, favourably disposed to this conduct?

Hattusili proposed to his royal brother three alternative courses of action:

> Now, my brother, write at least this [to Piyamaradu]: 'Rise up, go forth into the Land of Hatti. Your lord has settled his account with you! Otherwise come into the Land of Ahhiyawa, and in whatever place I settle you, (you must remain there). Otherwise rise up with your captives, your wives and children, and settle down in another place! So long as you are at enmity with the king of Hatti, exercise your hostility from another country! From my country you shall not conduct hostilities!'

This proposal represented a considerable backing-down from standard Hittite policy concerning subjects who had escaped the king's justice and sought asylum in another land. Almost invariably the king demanded the extradition of refugees and threatened war against anyone who refused to give them up. But on this occasion Hattusili had no desire to force an ultimatum upon his royal brother. Hence the three possible courses of action:

- persuade Piyamaradu to submit once more to Hittite sovereignty;
- provide him with a safe haven in Ahhiyawa, on the clear understanding that he would stay put and engage no further in anti-Hittite activities;
- compel him to move to another country, taking his family and retinue with him.

There had previously been serious differences between him and his corres pondent, Hattusili admitted, differences which had on at least one occasion brought the pair into conflict. But that was now in the past. And if in the past Hattusili's manner had seemed aggressive and insulting, it should be put down to the immaturity of youth. Yes, there had been more recent acrimonious exchanges between Hattusili and his royal brother. But that was probably due to their words being misreported by their messengers. Those responsible would be tried and, if

found guilty, executed for their offence. All this in the spirit of goodwill and co-operation, at least on Hattusili's part.

Hattusili went further. He addressed his correspondent not only as his brother and his equal, but also as a 'Great King'. By so doing he was apparently according him membership of that highly exclusive group of Great Kings who ruled the Near Eastern world. It would have been an unprecedentedly generous diplomatic gesture. Regardless of the Ahhiyawan king's status in his own world in or across the wine-dark sea—where he may well have been an important king, perhaps *the* most important king—he could claim no more than a toehold in the Near Eastern world. Neither he nor his kingdom rates even a passing mention in Near Eastern diplomatic literature outside the Hittite archives. For Hattusili's royal peers in the Near East he had no significance or relevance—even if they had been aware of his existence—within the sphere of their diplomatic and military activities and alliances. Given how jealous these kings were of their status, how quick to discredit those who unjustifiably sought or were accorded recognition as their peers, the terms in which Hattusili addressed this king of a remote western land would surely have provoked an incredulous, derisory reaction amongst his Near Eastern peers if ever they came to hear about it.

The likelihood is that Hattusili in his letter to the Ahhiyawan king was engaging in a piece of *ad-hoc* diplomacy. His attempts to secure stability in his western subject territories by force of arms had failed. All he could now do was to try to neutralize the activities of his enemies in the region by establishing an alliance with a foreign king who had given ample demonstration of his ability to influence and even direct the course of events there. An alliance with an independent ruler implied full diplomatic equality between the contracting parties. This was clearly acknowledged by Hattusili in the terms in which he addressed the man whose co-operation he was so anxious to secure. Absolute equality and close personal bonds as represented in the diplomatic phraseology by the term 'brotherhood' provided the diplomatic underpinning of Hattusili's treaty with the pharaoh Ramesses. Amongst other things, this treaty had helped maintain political stability in Syria, where Hatti and Egypt shared a common boundary. Perhaps a similar stability might be secured in western Anatolia. The letter which Hattusili wrote to his Ahhiyawan counterpart should probably be seen in this light—as a first step towards a full diplomatic alliance with a guarantee of co-operat ion in achieving lasting stability in the regions where the kings shared a common boundary.

The identity of Hattusili's correspondent

We shall consider below (pp. 209–11) what happened in the aftermath of this letter. But before doing so, let us speculate a little on the identity of the letter's recipient—beginning our speculations with a couple of negatives. The highly limited information contained in the only written sources available to us from the Mycenaean world—the Linear B tablets—provides us with the names of no

kings of this world. Our only possible source for the royal names of this period is Homer, and we must always bear in mind that Homer composed poetry, not history. Second, while the authorship of the letter can almost certainly be attributed to Hattusili, we cannot say precisely when during the course of his reign it was written. Given that he came to the throne *circa* 1267 and died *circa* 1237, a mid-thirteenth century date would be a reasonably close approximation.

That would fall within the period of possible dates for the destruction of Troy VIh, now considered the most likely candidate for Priam's Troy, the Troy of the Trojan War—on the assumption, of course, that the epic tradition has a kernel of historical truth.[14] Ceramic evidence from the site indicates that the destruction of this level occurred some time within the first seventy years or so of the thirteenth century,[15] probably around the middle of the century. Can we find any kind of link between the epic tradition and the events outlined in the Hittite king's letter —which we have concluded was written to an important ruler of the Mycenaean world? There is one small possibility. In what is little more than a passing reference, Hattusili indicated that he and his Ahhiyawan counterpart had come to blows over a country called Wilusa ('Now as we have reached agreement on the matter of Wilusa over which we went to war-…'). He saw the danger of a renewal of the conflict, with Piyamaradu acting as its catalyst. In order to forestall this, Hattusili urged his royal brother to say to Piyamaradu: The King of Hatti and I—in that matter of Wilusa over which we were at enmity, he has converted me and we have made friends;…a war would not be right for us.'

It is just possible that Wilusa provides a link between historical records and Homeric tradition. Its location and its name are both suggestive. As a result of an important text-join discovered in the 1980s,[16] the country so called in Hittite texts can now be confidently located in the north-west of Anatolia, in the region called the Troad in Classical times.[17] The name itself may be the Hittite equivalent of the Greek Ilion, used interchangeably in Classical literature with Troy.[18] That is to say, Wilusa could be the original of Homeric Troy.

Wilusa figures on a number of occasions in Hittite texts as a loyal vassal state of the Hittite king. In the thirteenth century its history appears to have been a fairly troubled one. Its territory was invaded and occupied by Piyamaradu, it was a potential *casus belli* between the Hittite and Ahhiyawan kings, and in the reign of Hattusili's son and successor Tudhaliya its king was deposed, probably by an enemy invader, and forced to flee his country. The context in which Wilusa is mentioned in the Tawagalawa letter indicates the likelihood of Ahhiyawan/ Mycenaean involvement in at least some of these activities, though actual aggression against Wilusa may have been carried out by an ally or agent like Piyamaradu, perhaps acting on the Ahhiyawan king's behalf, or at least with his support. That would explain why Hattusili urged the Ahhiyawan king to inform Piyamaradu that agreement had now been reached between the two Great Kings on the matter of Wilusa.

We know from artefactual evidence that the Mycenaean Greeks had extensive trading contacts with Troy, and, given its strategically valuable position

overlooking the stretch of water which the Greeks called the Hellespont, it is conceivable that an Ahhiyawan/Mycenaean king sought to expand his territorial holdings along the western Anatolian seaboard northwards to include Troy. This would provide an historically plausible scenario for conflicts in western Anatolia between intrusive Greek elements, or local agents acting on their behalf, and Hittite vassal states within the region. That would be consistent with the scenario that emerges from the Tawagalawa letter. Over the succeeding generations such historical events, sketchily preserved, may have been romanticized by a succession of poets into the epic tale which came finally to be associated with the name Homer. In the epic tradition Agamemnon, ruler of Mycenae, is the leader of the Greek forces against Troy. Is Homer’s Agamemnon purely the creation of a fertile poetic imagination? If in fact he evolved out of a genuine historical figure, a Mycenaean king of the thirteenth century, then the addressee of Hattusili’s letter might well have been his prototype.

Communications between the Hittite and Mycenaean worlds

There is a further interesting question which we might consider here. What were the mechanics of written communications between Hittite and Ahhiyawan kings? The letter we have been discussing was found in the Hittite archives and was written in the Hittite language. That is what we would normally expect if it was in fact a copy kept for reference purposes after the original had been dispatched. Hittite copies were often made of original letters written in Akkadian to foreign kings, as presumably Egyptian copies were made of the Akkadian letters dispatched by the pharaoh to his various royal brothers and Syrian vassals. But what language and script were used in letters addressed to a Mycenaean Greek king? Literacy had come to the Mycenaean world at least by the fourteenth century, but as far as we know the so-called Linear B script used by Mycenaean scribes was limited to the labelling of goods or compiling of inventories. We have no evidence that it was ever used for any wider purposes, like the cuneiform scripts of the Near Eastern civilizations. And we can hardly imagine that the use of Akkadian as a *lingua franca* extended to lands so far removed from and with such tenuous links with the Akkadian-speaking world.

The likelihood is that the original of the Tawagalawa letter as well as the copy kept in Hattusa were written in Hittite. Who, then, read the letter to its recipient? It is most unlikely that there were Mycenaean scribes who had mastery of the complex cuneiform script as well as competence in one or more of the languages in which the script was written. Besides, whether or not they had the capacity to develop such skills, the apparent infrequency of written communications passing between Mycenaean and Hittite courts and the total absence of any known correspondence between Mycenaean and other Near Eastern courts would not have justified the effort.

It has also to be said that we have yet to find a single letter, or even a fragment of a letter, written by an Ahhiyawan/Mycenaean king to anyone, whether fellow Greek or foreigner. But there is no doubt that Mycenaean kings did have in their service persons who could read letters sent to them from abroad and write letters dictated by them. From the Tawagalawa letter we learn that the Ahhiyawan king had sent written instructions to his Luwian-speaking agent Atpa in Milawata ordering him to deliver up Piyamaradu to the Hittites. And as we have noted, Hattusili urged his royal brother to write to Piyamaradu with three options for his future. The likeli-hood is that any correspondence that did emanate from a Mycenaean king was written in either Hittite or in Luwian, the latter closely related to Hittite and being the language most widely spoken in western Anatolia. The Ahhiyawan king's close contact with the western Anatolian peoples would certainly have necessitated the services of native speakers who could act as translators and interpreters, including some who had been trained as scribes. No doubt there were Mycenaean Greeks who developed fluency in the Luwian language and perhaps also in Hittite. But the task of putting stylus to tablet almost certainly fell exclusively to scribes from Anatolia, who had mastery of both Luwian and Hittite in their written as well as in their spoken form. We should note that all surviving written communications between a Hittite king and his western Anatolian subjects are in Hittite. This was perhaps the only language used in Hittite correspondence with both the Ahhiyawan king and with Hatti's western vassal states. It may be that the chancelleries of even the vassal rulers in western Anatolia were staffed with scribes sent from Hattusa, and that this was the exclusive language of diplomacy used in dealings with these states as well as with Ahhiyawa.

We have no indication whether Hattusili received any reply to the very carefully worded letter he wrote to his Ahhiyawan counterpart. And though we hear no more of Piyamaradu, he very likely continued to raid Hittite subject territory for as long as he had the strength and inclination to do so. Hattusili's son and successor Tudhaliya IV inherited from his father a number of unresolved problems in the west.

The end of Ahhiyawan/Mycenaean involvement in western Anatolia

In Tudhaliya's reign Wilusa once more figures in the correspondence, this time in a letter written by Tudhaliya to one of his western Anatolian vassals. From references which it makes to Milawata's territories and boundaries, the letter has long been referred to as the 'Milawata letter'. Unfortunately this potentially valuable document survives only in very fragmentary form, thus limiting the amount of information it makes available to us. However, the discovery in the early 1980s of another piece of the tablet on which it was inscribed has enabled us to reconstruct some of its contents.[19] Precise details are still unclear, but it appears that the Hittites had regained control of Milawata, with the support of the

letter's addressee, and that its territory had been placed by Tudhaliya under the authority of the addressee.

The name of this person is now lost and we can only guess at who he was. Scholars have suggested various possibilities. The most recent and most plausible of these suggestions identifies him with a man called Tarkasnawa, who figures in a relief sculpture and accompanying hieroglyphic inscription in a mountain pass called Karabel 28 kilometres east of Izmir.[20] Tarkasnawa was ruler of the kingdom of Mira, in this period the largest and most powerful of the Hittites' vassal states in western Anatolia. It appears from the Milawata letter that Tudhaliya had appointed its addressee as a kind of regional over-lord within the western Anatolian region. Tarkasnawa would have been a most appropriate appointee to such a position. We learn too from the combined fragments of the letter that a king of Wilusa called Walmu had earlier been deposed and fled his country, but that he was now in the custody of the letter's addressee. Tudhaliya asked that Walmu be sent to Hattusa as a first step towards restoring him to his kingdom's throne. The letter was accompanied by the king's envoy Kuwalanaziti, who brought with him documents confirming the legitimacy of Walmu's claim to this throne.

If Tarkasnawa was indeed the addressee of the Milawata letter, then the extra authority apparently assigned to him, in addition to that which he already exercised as ruler of Mira, would have given him far-reaching powers in western Anatolia, over a region extending from Milawata to the kingdom of Wilusa in the far north-west. This was authority on an unprecedented scale for a vassal ruler, whose responsibilities as his overlord's chief representative in the region may have been something akin to those exercised by a viceroy. Tudhaliya may well have adopted a radically new approach towards the problems of western Anatolia. By conceding more extensive authority to a local ruler, he was seeking to achieve greater and longer-lasting stability in the region, keeping it within the Hittite sphere of influence but with minimal direct Hittite involvement.

Where does Ahhiyawa figure in all this? We can but argue from silence. The Tawagalawa letter contains our last reference to either a king or a land of Ahhiyawa. At the time the letter was written, Milawata was an acknowledged Ahhiyawan dependency. In the Milawata letter that is clearly no longer the case. The letter's surviving fragments provide us with indications of upheavals in the region and the establishment of a new Hittite-backed authority over it. This must have come about some time after Hattusili's attempt to reach a diplomatic settlement with his Ahhiyawan counterpart. The almost certain failure of this attempt may well have led to a determined and ultimately successful effort by the Hittites, perhaps under the new king Tudhaliya, to rid western Anatolia once and for all of the presence of their troublesome and untrustworthy Greek neighbour. That they were apparently successful may have been due in no small measure to the man who was now rewarded with the status of regional overlord. We have suggested that this was the Miran king Tarkasnawa, the man whose image can still be seen today in the mountain pass of Karabel.

There is an interesting footnote to this. In the draft version of a treaty which h Tudhaliya drew up with Shaushgamuwa, one of his Syrian vassals, a list is given of the kings whom Tudhaliya considered to be of equal status to himself—the kings of Egypt, Babylon and Assyria.[21] Initially the king of Ahhiyawa was also included—but the entry was subsequently crossed out! How do we explain this? The fact that he was there in the first place suggests that until very recently he had in fact been considered one of the Great Kings of the Late Bronze Age world —at least by the Hittites. Questionable as his status may have been in the broader Near Eastern context, it had been accorded to him by Hattusili, probably as a matter of diplomatic expediency but also in recognition of the significant influence which he wielded in the western Anatolian region from his well-secured base in Milawata. But once he lost that base he ceased to be a force to be reckoned with or acknowledged. With the scoring out of his name in a draft Hittite document, this *pro tem* member of the club of Great Kings made his unceremonious departure from the records of the Late Bronze Age Near East.

Notes

1 For recent treatments of the material evidence for Minoan settlement at Miletos, see Niemeier and Niemeier (1997), Niemeier (1998:27–9).
2 See Mee (1978), Niemeier (1998:40–1).
3 For a recent treatment of the evidence for this in the light of ongoing excavations on the site, see Niemeier (1998:34–40).
4 Cf.Hawkins (1998:2).
5 Some decades prior to this, a 'man of Ahhiya' called Attarssiya was militarily active both in western Anatolia and on the island of Cyprus. However, his designation 'man of…' suggests that he was an individual Ahhiyawan who had established a base in western Anatolia rather than an officially recognized king; see Bryce (1998:140).
6 See Bryce (1998:209–10).
7 *KUB* XIV 3 (*CTH* 181), ed. Sommer (1932:2–194), and trans. in part by Gurney in Garstang and Gurney (1959:111–14).
8 See refs. in Bryce (1998:321, n. 89). Gurney (2002) has now argued for an earlier attribution to Hattusili's father, Muwatalli. However, I believe that the weight of evidence still favours Hattusili.
9 Sallapa's location is unknown, but it must have been situated about halfway along one of the routes between the Hittite capital and Piyamaradu's base in western Anatolia.
10 This and the following passages are extracts from the Tawagalawa letter, translated by Gurney or adapted from his translation.
11 The distinction, if any, between *tuhkantiand tartenu* is uncertain. On the apparent interchangeability of the terms, see Gurney (1983:97–8).
12 It had probably come under Ahhiyawan control some time during the reign of Muwatalli; see Bryce (1998:244).
13 Page (1976:15).

14 On the possible historicity of the Trojan War, see Bryce (1998:392–407).

15 I.e. during the LHIIIb period. Cf. Mee (1978:146; 1984:45), Mellink (1986:94).

16 The join is to the so-called Manapa-Tarhunda letter, and the augmented letter (*KUB* XIX 5 and *KBo* XIX 79) is edited and discussed by Houwink ten Cate (1983–4:38–64).

17 See Bryce (1998:395).

18 See Güterbock (1986:35), who proposes Wilusa>*Wiluwa>*Wiluas>Wilios, the initial *w* equating with an original Greek digamma.

19 See Hoffner (1982).

20 Hawkins (1998:19).

21 Tudhaliya:Shaushgamuwa treaty (*KUB* XXIII 1 (*CTH* 105) IV 1–7. The treaty is edited by Kühne and Otten (1971).

13
THE ELUSIVE URHI-TESHUB

The Hittite king Muwatalli II died without leaving a son of a first-rank wife to succeed him. On this occasion, therefore, the royal succession passed to a second-rank son, called a *pahhurzi* in Hittite. Though he was but the offspring of a secondary wife, a *pahhurzi* was still perfectly eligible, according to the rules of royal succession, to become the next Great King of Hatti. We have already met this particular second-rank son of Muwatalli. He was called Urhi-Teshub. On his accession, he adopted the throne-name Mursili, one of the most illustrious names in the Hittite dynasty and most recently that of his revered grandfather, King Mursili II. Muwatalli had made it clear that Urhi-Teshub was to be his successor. And initially the fledgling king had the support of his uncle Hattusili, at that time the most powerful man in the Hittite realm. In fact, Hattusili claimed for himself the credit of bestowing the kingship upon his nephew.[1]

Overthrow and banishment

To begin with, nephew and uncle probably worked closely together. But Urhi-Teshub became increasingly concerned about the extensive powers his father had conferred upon his uncle. He may well have seen these as a serious threat to his own authority. Indeed it is not unlikely that Hattusili sought to exploit his nephew's youth and inexperience in order to increase his influence throughout the kingdom. Tensions arose between the pair. Urhi-Teshub attempted to weaken his uncle's influence by stripping him of a number of his powers. Nonetheless Hattusili remained loyal to Urhi-Teshub, or so he claimed, out of respect for his deceased brother and his sense of right conduct. In any case he still had control over the northern half of the kingdom, which he ruled virtually as a king in his own right from his seat in Hakpis. And Nerik, one of the holiest cities in the Hittite world, also fell within his authority.

It was only when Urhi-Teshub sought to deprive him of both these cities that the open rupture came. Hattusili declared war upon his nephew. The gods, he said, would decide the outcome. In the ensuing brief and bloody conflict, many of Urhi-Teshub's subjects remained loyal to their king, both in the homeland and in the vassal states (a fact which Hattusili subsequently played down). But the king lost to his uncle the support of a significant part of the Hittite nobility, and this,

combined with his failure to gain support in other crucial areas, inevitably spelt his doom. He was eventually penned up 'like a pig in a sty' in the holy city of Samuha on the upper course of the Marassantiya river. From here he was taken back to the Hittite capital in chains. Hattusili now ascended the throne of Hatti. Henceforth the succession would remain in his own family line. Urhi-Teshub's sons would be excluded from their rightful inheritance.

While pretenders to the Hittite throne generally showed little hesitation in removing a current occupant from it by assassination, they were rather more sensitive about executing a displaced king if he managed to survive the coup—particularly if he was closely related to his usurper. Exile was the only practical alternative. In Urhi-Teshub's case somewhere had to be found which was far enough from the capital and the bulk of his supporters to discourage him from attempting to regain his throne, but close enough for him to be effectively supervised. Hattusili chose the Nuhasse lands in Syria as Urhi-Teshub's place of exile, appointing him governor of a number of cities in the region. He may have reasoned that assigning certain administrative responsibilities to his nephew would keep him out in the open and divert his attention from any thought of attempting to seize back his throne. Besides, his appointment rendered him directly answerable to one of the two Hittite viceroys in Syria, both of whom were no doubt instructed to keep a close eye on his activities.

But whatever Hattusili's intentions in banishing his nephew to this region, his selection of it proved a disastrous error of judgement. Urhi-Teshub had not the slightest intention of resigning himself to his fate and took the earliest opportunity to drum up support for his cause. He entered into secret negotiations with the Babylonians who were acting on behalf of their king, Kadashman-Turgu, and made preparations for a visit to Babylon.[2] He also wrote to Shalmaneser I, who became king in Assyria not long after Hattusili had seized the throne in Hatti.[3] We have no information about the subject of his discussions with the Babylonians or the contents of his letter to Shalmaneser. But almost certainly he was seeking support from both Great Kings as part of a general call on foreign assistance in his bid to regain his throne.[4] The fact that the Babylonians were willing to enter into negotiations with him suggests that at this stage their king had not yet decided whether he would recognize the new ruler of Hatti. And initially Urhi-Teshub may have been able to count on at least diplomatic support from Assyria, especially if it was Shalmaneser who delivered the famous royal Assyrian snub to Hattusili—telling him that he was not a proper Great King, just a substitute for one.

Fortunately for Hattusili, word reached him of his nephew's secret deal ings with Babylon, and possibly also his correspondence with Assyria, before Urhi-Teshub's plans could be translated into action. The usurper was quick to respond. He gave orders that Urhi-Teshub was to be removed to a new place of exile 'along the sea' or possibly 'across the sea'. Both are possible translations of the Hittite expression 'A.AB.BA *ta-pu-sa*'. If the former is correct, Urhi-Teshub may have been resettled somewhere along the Anatolian coast in territory subject

to Hittite control. If the latter, Alasiya, on the island of Cyprus, may have been Urhi-Teshub's new home—though it is far from certain that Hatti exercised any form of control or influence over Cyprus at this time.

The flight to Egypt

In any case, Urhi-Teshub did not remain long in his new abode. At the first opportunity he took to flight, resurfacing in the land of Egypt. He was now beyond his uncle's grasp, or so he thought. Hattusili wrote to Ramesses demanding his nephew's extradition. Ramesses failed to comply. Hattusili then wrote to the Babylonian king Kadashman-Turgu complaining of the pharaoh's lack of co-operation. Kadashman-Turgu was sympathetic. He had now, apparently, decided to recognize the usurper as Hatti's rightful king and promised him at least a token gesture of support by severing diplomatic relations with the pharaoh. This we learn from the well-known letter which Hattusili subsequently sent to Kadashman-Turgu's son and successor Kadashman-Enlil: Enlil:

> My enemy who had fled to another country took refuge with the king of Egypt. But when I wrote to the king of Egypt 'Send my enemy to me', he did not do so. So the king of Egypt and I became hostile to each other, and I wrote to your father: The king of Egypt comes to the assistance of my enemy.' So your father cut off the messenger of the king of Egypt.[5]

Though the 'enemy' who took refuge in Egypt is not actually named in the letter, there can be little doubt that he was Urhi-Teshub.

To what lengths was Hattusili prepared to go in his attempts to retrieve his nephew? His words to Kadashman-Turgu, The King of Egypt and I became hostile to each other', led the Babylonian to take an extreme view of the situation: it seemed that Egypt and Hatti were now virtually on a war footing: 'If your troops go against Egypt,' he wrote back to Hattusili, 'then I will go with you. If you go against Egypt, I will send you such infantry and chariotry as I have available to go.'[6] More than once in the past a foreign king's refusal to hand back to the Hittites refugees from their authority had served as a provocation to war. But on this occasion Kadashman-Turgu was probably over-reacting—if indeed Hattusili has faithfully reproduced what he actually wrote.[7] After Kadesh, the prospect of another major war between Hatti and Egypt was extremely remote (even though Ramesses himself had accused Hattusili of some provocative sword-rattling; see Chapter 4). But it suited Hattusili's purpose well to remind Kadashman-Enlil of the support his father had supposedly promised him, and the precedent this ought to be setting for the son but recently installed on the throne of Babylon.

At all events there can be no doubt that Urhi-Teshub fled to Egypt and spent some time there. The question is when did his flight take place—before or after

his uncle's famous treaty with Ramesses? Scholars disagree about this. The evidence is not entirely clear one way or the other. However, it does seem more likely that he sought refuge with Ramesses in the period of continuing strained relations between Hatti and Egypt *before* the treaty was drawn up in 1259—particularly because of the treaty's mutual extradition clauses, which required each of its signatories to hand back fugitives from his co-signatory's lands. It is most improbable that Urhi-Teshub would have risked seeking asylum with Ramesses once the treaty had been concluded and Hattusili had been acknowledged by the pharaoh as Hatti's rightful king. If he had in fact arrived on Ramesses' doorstep after the treaty, refusal by the pharaoh to give him up would have breached quite blatantly the treaty's specific extradition provisions. Bad enough if Ramesses had refused to surrender to his treaty partner a refugee from Hatti who had come to him *before* the treaty—though he might have argued that the treaty's provisions were not retrospective if he really wanted to keep the refugee. Far worse if his refusal came *after* the treaty had been concluded and he had sworn on oath before the gods that he would honour all its provisions. Given the pharaoh's undoubtedly sincere desire for a genuine and lasting peace with Hatti's present king, it is very difficult to believe that he would have acted in this way.

But at whatever time he arrived in Egypt, Urhi-Teshub's sojourn there was of great concern to his uncle. Hattusili could never feel secure on his throne while the man he had displaced from it and who wanted it back remained beyond his authority. That also raises the question of how long Urhi-Teshub actually enjoyed the pharaoh's hospitality. The only certainty is that after doing so for an undisclosed period the ex-king of Hatti headed off for parts unknown. Whether or not he had his host's leave to do so is also undisclosed. No doubt he was kept in Egypt long enough for the pharaoh to extract every useful morsel of information he could from him about the homeland from which he had been banished, about the man who had seized his throne and about the Hittite royal family in general. Ramesses could hardly have had a better source of intelligence on Hittite affairs. There was much useful information Urhi-Teshub could have provided to the pharaoh about his royal brother's kingdom—information to be stored away, then retrieved, dusted off and used whenever the time was appropriate. Very likely it was Urhi-Teshub who informed the pharaoh of the age of his aunt, Massanauzzi, Hattusili's sister. And undoubtedly Urhi-Teshub provided his Egyptian host with detailed information about the formidable Puduhepa and the power she wielded in his royal brother's kingdom—valuable information to have as the pharaoh entered into correspondence with the Hittite royal couple.

Urhi-Teshub on the run

But there came a time when Urhi-Teshub's usefulness was at an end, and Ramesses no doubt found his presence in his land an increasing liability. Also, once Urhi-Teshub realized that he had no prospect of support from the pharaoh

in getting back his throne he may well have decided to leave his host's country at the earliest opportunity, with or without his host's knowledge or consent. Where did he go? Mystery surrounds his subsequent whereabouts. The letters exchanged between the royal courts about him now take on a rather curious turn. Previously Hattusili had demanded that Urhi-Teshub be extradited from Egypt. Ramesses had refused. Now, it seems, Urhi-Teshub was no longer in Egypt, and Hattusili was demanding that the pharaoh track him down and take him back there!

> The Great King, the King of Egypt, should get his infantry and his chariotry to exert themselves, and he should expend his gold, his silver, his horses, his copper and his garments in order to take Urhi-Teshub to Egypt. He shall not allow him to become strong and to wage war against Hatti.[8]

In urging Ramesses to spare no effort in finding Urhi-Teshub and taking him into custody, bribing his supporters if necessary,[9] Hattusili was arguably making a quite legitimate call upon the pharaoh's services. In terms of his treaty obligations, Ramesses could well be expected to take action against Urhi-Teshub if the ex-king was seen as posing a military threat to his treaty partner's kingdom, particularly if Urhi-Teshub was operating from Egyptian-controlled territory. He had by no means reconciled himself to his uncle's rule; nor had he in any way abandoned his campaign to regain his throne. But Hattusili no longer wanted him back in Hittite custody. Indeed, he had proved much more troublesome while he had been theoretically under Hittite authority than he had after he escaped from it. The Land of the Nile was not such a bad place after all for a Hittite dissident. Now that Hattusili was linked by treaty with Ramesses and Ramesses had pronounced him the true Great King of Hatti, the uncle might well have concluded that there were far worse locations than Egypt as a suitable place of exile for his still-defiant nephew.

Of course the nephew had to be caught first. And that proved no easy task. Puduhepa wrote to Ramesses reminding him of her husband's request and similarly urging him to spare no expense or effort in running the fugitive to ground. Her own request to the pharaoh was based on the assumption that Urhi-Teshub was still somewhere in Egypt's subject territories, perhaps in southern Syria. If she and her husband really believed this, Ramesses' reply was something akin to the ancient equivalent of a bomb-shell. He would have been only too willing to oblige, he said, but unfortunately all his efforts had come to nothing. The reason was that Urhi-Teshub was no longer in lands under his authority. He was back in Hattusili's own lands! What is more, he had been captured there, by the king's own son, but had escaped once again by bribing his guards!

This at least is what Ramesses appears to be claiming in parallel letters which he wrote to Hattusili and Puduhepa.[10] Unfortunately the text of both letters becomes fragmentary at crucial points in the pharaoh's narration of events. But these events can probably be reconstructed along the following lines: it appears

that Hattusili had instructed his son, Prince Nerikkaili, to collaborate with the pharaoh in attempting to track down Urhi-Teshub. Nerikkaili was married to the daughter of the king of Amurru and may at the time have been acting as the agent or representative of his father in the region. Urhi-Teshub had managed to elude his Egyptian pursuers by crossing into Hittite-controlled territory. Here he fell into the hands of his cousin Nerikkaili. But, much to the captive's good fortune, Nerikkaili apparently died, even before he had notified his father that Urhi-Teshub was in his custody. Urhi-Teshub then managed to bribe his guards, who set him free. Once again the fugitive was on the loose.[11]

Ramesses protested that he had already informed the Hittite court of all these developments. He had spared no effort or expense, he said, in attempting to capture Urhi-Teshub, just as his royal brother had requested. But the fugitive had escaped his territory, and that was why he could not have him transported back to Egypt.[12] He had repeatedly explained all this to his royal brother! Egypt was still available as a place of exile. But it was now up to Hattusili to find the fugitive and arrange his transportation there.

Ramesses had gone further. In the spirit of co-operation, he had suggested to Hattusili places within his own subject territories where he might find Urhi-Teshub. Perhaps he was in northern Syria, in the lands of Aleppo or Kadesh; perhaps he was in southern Anatolia, in the land of Kizzuwadna. Hattusili rejected all these suggestions—emphatically and angrily: 'It is *not* the case that he went into the Land of Kadesh! It is *not* the case that he went into the Land of Aleppo! It is *not* the case that he went into the Land of Kizzuwadna!' Hattusili went on to declare that if in fact the fugitive had been in any of these lands the king's own loyal subjects would surely have handed him over. 'Your subjects are not to be trusted!' was the pharaoh's dismissive reply.[13] After having done all he could (so he claimed) to be co-operative, Ramesses felt much aggrieved at his royal brother's refusal to believe him, and adopted an air of injured innocence. Once again he wrote to Hattusili, once more protesting that he did not know where the fugitive was: 'Look, I don't understand these words you have written about this matter of Urhi-Teshub, these many, many words unworthy to be heard. You say: "Bring him into the Land of Egypt!" But I really don't know where he is! He has flown like a bird!'[14]

It was not so much Ramesses' claimed ignorance of Urhi-Teshub's whereabouts that had roused his royal brother's ire. What Hattusili had found particularly galling was the suggestion that Urhi-Teshub was in his own territory and he had known nothing about it, that his own subjects were aiding and abetting the fugitive, refusing to give him up, or at the very least keeping his whereabouts secret from their king. To be informed of this by a foreign king, albeit a royal brother for whom of course he had deep love and affection, was acutely embarrassing. Ramesses knew this full well. His protestations of innocence were quite disingenuous.

The mystery of Urhi-Teshub's whereabouts

A firm chronology for all these events still eludes us. We cannot be sure when Urhi-Teshub fled to Egypt or when he left it. Puduhepa had claimed, in her well-known draft letter to Ramesses, that he was still the pharaoh's guest during the period of the marriage negotiations between the Hittite and Egyptian courts. Since the marriage took place in Ramesses' thirty-fourth year (*circa* 1246), Urhi-Teshub would thus have been in Egypt some twenty years or so after losing his throne—*if* we are to believe Puduhepa. But, as we observed in Chapter 6, her statement should probably be treated as no more than a passing sneer, in reaction to Ramesses' repeated claim that Urhi-Teshub was no longer in Egypt. She had been angered by her royal brother's complaints about how long it was taking to send him his bride—so she took the opportunity to respond with a long-standing grievance of her own and her husband's. She gave an explanation for the delay in dispatching the bride, and suggested that the impatient groom check out what she said with Urhi-Teshub—who was, of course, there with him! She was surely being sarcastic. Given the context in which her advice was offered, we should be very careful about using it as a historically reliable piece of information. Indeed, on this matter there is every reason to believe that Ramesses was telling the truth—that Urhi-Teshub was no longer in Egypt.[15]

So where was he? A little further investigative work may help us to answer this question. In the region of the Konya Plain in southern Turkey a group of hieroglyphic inscriptions have been discovered, on a mountain-top sanctuary now called Karadağ, and on a site called Kızıldağ, where the remains of an ancient city are located.[16] The inscriptions, which are generally dated to the period immediately after the fall of the Hittite empire, were composed by a man called Hartapu, whose name is accompanied by the title 'Great King'. Hartapu also gives us the name of his father, Mursili, who is similarly entitled a Great King. Father and son appear again on an inscription discovered on a hill called Burunkaya (18 kilometres north-east of modern Aksaray), again both with the title 'Great King'.[17] The name Mursili is of course very familiar to us. Does its appearance in these inscriptions indicate a family link between Hartapu's family and the royal house of Hattusa? Quite possibly. It has been suggested, for example, that Hartapu and his father were descendants of Kurunta, brother of Urhi-Teshub and former ruler of Tarhuntassa, a kingdom first established in southern Anatolia by King Muwatalli early in the thirteenth century.[18] Hartapu's father would thus have adopted from the *former* Hittite royal dynasty one of its most illustrious names.

A kingdom in exile?

There is another possibility. As we have noted, Hartapu's inscriptions have generally been dated to the period after the fall of the Hittite kingdom in the twelfth century, primarily on the grounds that no local Anatolian ruler would

have referred to himself as ‘Great King’ while the throne of the Hittite capital was still occupied. But this assumption has recently been challenged. Singer argues that on chronological and stylistic grounds Hartapu’s inscriptions belong more appropriately to the period before rather than after the fall of Hattusa.[19] On these grounds, if Singer is correct we should place Hartapu and his father Mursili in the last decades of the Late Bronze Age. This would mean that there were two successive local kings of southern Anatolia who called themselves Great Kings while a Great King still sat upon the throne of Hatti. Is this historically plausible?

We know from seal impressions that on his accession Urhi-Teshub assumed the throne-name Mursili. Thus, strictly speaking, we should refer to him as Mursili III. But Hattusili never called his nephew by his thronename, obviously because he refused to recognize the status of the man whose throne he had seized. To the usurper he was always merely Urhi-Teshub, as indeed he was to many others, including Ramesses, after his overthrow. None of our surviving documents dating to the period after the coup in Hattusa refer to him by any name other than Urhi-Teshub. But Urhi-Teshub never gave up his ambition of regaining his throne. And we know that he had sons to maintain his dynastic line.[20]

The conclusion to which we are heading should now be obvious: that Hartapu’s father, the Mursili of the hieroglyphic inscriptions, was none other than the deposed Hittite king Urhi-Teshub.[21] It is quite true that no local king within the Hittite realm would dare call himself a Great King while the throne of Hatti was occupied by *the* Great King.[22] But that might not apply to someone who believed that *he* was the rightful occupant of that throne, which he was determined to secure for himself. In suggesting in his letters to Hattusili where Urhi-Teshub had ended up after his flight from Egypt, Ramesses may have come much closer to the truth than Hattusili wanted to believe. As Ramesses persistently maintained, Urhi-Teshub had indeed escaped back to Hattusili’s own territory.

Once there, he may well have started building up support for himself in northern Syria and southern Anatolia, his support culminating in the establishment of a kingdom in exile which came to extend across a substantial area of southern Anatolia. Indeed it may have incorporated the kingdom of Tarhuntassa, where Urhi-Teshub’s brother Kurunta had previously been installed. Once established in his new kingdom, Urhi-Teshub openly used his throne-name Mursili and adopted the title Great King as a defiant assertion of his right to the title and as a challenge to the present occupant of the throne in Hattusa, a throne to which he had never relinquished his claim. Hartapu followed in his father’s footsteps.

The last kings of Hatti were almost certainly confronted with rebellions in their territories in southern Anatolia. They were obliged to conduct a number of campaigns in the region, which was proving increasingly volatile in the final years of the Hittite kingdom. Urhi-Teshub, along with his son Hartapu, may well have contributed to this volatility in seeking to win back for their family the now

disintegrating kingdom of Hatti. But any hopes they had for regaining the Hittite throne for themselves and their descend ants proved unattainable. The kingdom which Urhi-Teshub established in southern Anatolia and which his son Hartapu inherited from him was itself soon to disappear, as it became engulfed in the upheavals which brought the Hattusa-based Hittite kingdom to an end.

Notes

1 The following account of the deteriorating relations and eventual conflict between uncle and nephew is based upon the so-called *Apology* of Hattusili (*CTH* 81), ed. Otten (1981).
2 *Apology* §11, IV 34–5.
3 We know of his letter to Shalmaneser from the fact that the Assyrian king's son and successor Tukulti-Ninurta subsequently returned it to Tudhaliya IV, as indicated in Tudhaliya's letter to Tukulti-Ninurta, *KUB* XXVI 70 (*CTH* 209.21). See Hagenbuchner (1989:265–7 no. 194).
4 He may also have attempted, unsuccessfully, to gain the support of the king of Ahhiyawa; see Klengel (1999:223–4 (for refs), 232).
5 *KBo* I 10 and *KUB* III 72 (*CTH* 172) obv. 67–9
6 This response (trans. Beckman 1996:135) allegedly made by Kadashman-Turgu is also reported by Hattusili in his letter to Kadashman-Enlil. Though it occurs shortly before the reference to Hattusili's enemy's flight to Egypt, I have taken it as belonging to the same context.
7 It is possible that for his own ends Hattusili tinkered with the truth in reporting to Kadashman-Enlil the offer allegedly made by his father and predecessor.
8 Passage from a letter by Hattusili to Ramesses, quoted by Ramesses in his letter to Kupanta-Kurunta, *ÄHK* 28 obv. 15–19:74–5, trans. after Beckman (1996:124).
9 *ÄHK* 27 obv. 1'–11': 72–3.
10 *ÄHK* 26:70–3 and *ÄHK* 27:72–5, respectively.
11 This largely follows the reconstruction of events proposed by Edel (*ÄHK* II: 123–4).
12 *ÄHK* 28, obv. 21–7:76–7.
13 *ÄHK* 29, esp. obv. 17–21:78–9.
14 *ÄHK* 24 rev. 23–5:62–3.
15 We must of course remember that Puduhepa's letter is only a draft. Parts of what she said may well have been modified or deleted in her final version.
16 Two from the former, five from the latter; published by Alp (1974). See Hawkins (2000:433–41).
17 Alp (1974:20), Hawkins (2000:437–8, 442).
18 Hawkins (1992:270).
19 Singer (1996:68–71).
20 This is evident from an oracle enquiry text, *KUB* XVI 32 (*CTH* 582), in which Hattusili III's son and successor Tudhaliya considered the question of territorial compensation for Urhi-Teshub's sons.
21 As suggested initially by Mellaart (1974:514–16). See, more recently, Singer (1996:70), Hawkins (1998:20–1).

22 Unless we take up Singer’s suggestion (1996:64–5) that there was a period of peaceful co-existence and co-operation between two Anatolian Great Kings at the end of the Late Bronze Age.

14
LAST DAYS

Prolonged droughts; famine; earthquakes; a general systems breakdown; waves of marauding invaders; uprisings by local populations—all have been seen as factors responsible for, contributing to or symptomatic of the widespread upheavals, from mainland Greece to the Euphrates, from northern Anatolia to the shores of Egypt, that marked the decline and collapse of many centres of power, many cities and petty kingdoms in the final decades of the Late Bronze Age. Not surprisingly, our sources of information for these decades are frustratingly sparse, for the period which we are now entering is an increasingly unstable one. Administrative structures are progressively breaking down, networks of vassal states are disintegrating, empires are crumbling. And there are few to chronicle such events.

Yet even these last days have left us with records of a Great King's military triumphs. Victories at sea off the coast of Cyprus, victories on land across Anatolia's southern coastlands to the far west: these were the proud achievements claimed by the last Bronze Age rulers of Hatti.[1] Resounding successes won on land and sea against the so-called Sea Peoples, the hordes who swept across the face of the Near East before finally being repulsed on the frontiers of Egypt: this was the crowning achievement of the last of the great pharaohs, Ramesses III.[2]

Of course we cannot be sure how much in these royal pronouncements is historical truth, how much is propagandistic exaggeration and distortion—the latter all the more likely in the case of a Great King whose position at home and whose influence and authority abroad had become increasingly precarious. That almost certainly applied to the embattled Hittite king Suppiluliuma II (Suppiluliama), the last of his line to occupy the throne of Hattusa. Fortunately we have a number of letters from the Bronze Age's final years which provide an important balance to the propaganda and rhetoric of the official records preserved on stone and in royal archives. The letters also afford some interesting insights into life and conditions in general at this time, as well as revealing to us some of the personal attitudes, fears and hopes of their authors in the increasingly insecure environment in which they lived.

The Ugarit letters

Ugarit has proved a particularly rich repository of correspondence in the late thirteenth to the early twelfth century. And it is on this small but very significant part of the Near Eastern world that we shall focus our attention as we bring to a close our survey of the royal correspondence of the Late Bronze Age.

Since joining the Hittite camp in the reign of Suppiluliuma I, Ugarit had undoubtedly become one of the jewels in Hatti's crown. A prosperous state in a valuable strategic location, it had maintained its loyalty to Hatti for more than a century, and presumably while doing so had contributed much wealth, through tribute and other means, to the Great King's royal coffers. But as Hatti's grip upon its empire was seen to be loosening, Ugarit may have been but one of a number of vassal states that began to neglect their duties to their overlord. The first evidence we have of this comes with Ugarit's third-last king, Ibiranu (1230–1210), who probably assumed his country's royal mantle during the reign of Hatti's third-last king, Tudhaliya IV. After completing the local formalities of enthronement, Ibiranu had failed to observe the usual procedures for acknowledging the Great King of Hatti as his overlord. This prompted a strong letter of rebuke from the Hittite 'prince' Pihawalwi:[3] 'Since you have assumed royal power in Ugarit, why have you not come before His Majesty?' Pihawalwi wrote. 'And why have you not regularly sent messengers? This has made His Majesty very angry. So send messengers to His Majesty with all haste, and see that gifts are brought for the king along with my gifts!'[4]

There was more at stake than simply a failure to follow diplomatic protocol. Given that vassal treaties were personal compacts between overlord and vassal ruler, it was essential that the obligations which they entailed be firmly reasserted every time a new ruler—whether overlord or vassal—ascended his kingdom's throne. The fact that Ibiranu had not yet formally acknowledged his allegiance to the Great King of Hatti may well have raised concerns in the Hittite administration about Ugarit's future loyalties.

With good reason. That Ibiranu's lack of action was not merely an isolated diplomatic oversight is made clear from other letters in an archive dating to the thirteenth century, discovered during the course of a salvage excavation in Ugarit in 1973. Some 120 tablets and fragments were uncovered, twelve written in the Ugaritic language, the rest in Akkadian. The former were published promptly, the latter not until 1991.[5] Subsequent excavations conducted from the late 1980s onwards brought further tablets from the archive to light, culminating in a find in 1994 of no less than 300 tablets and fragments.[6] The archive's owner was a man called Urtenu, a high-ranking dignitary of Ugarit at this time.[7]

In addition to administrative and religious documents, the texts from the 1973 excavation include a number of letters written to Ugarit's king by the viceroy at Carchemish. For it was to him that the local vassal was almost certainly answerable, in the first instance at least, on all matters relating to his role as a subject of the Hittite crown.[8] To judge from the letters unearthed in 1973, the

relationship between viceroy and local ruler had become an uneasy one. The letters clearly convey the impression of a vassal who was reluctant to fulfil his responsibilities, or at best did so in a halfhearted way.

One of the contentious issues was the gifts which he had sent to Hattusa. We have seen from the Amarna correspondence that the quality of gifts was an important means of assessing the affection and esteem in which one royal brother was held by another. So, too, a vassal's devotion and loyalty to his overlord were judged by the quality of the 'presents' which he sent to the overlord's court. And it was on this matter that the Ugaritic king was taken to task by the viceroy—for the paltriness of his gifts to the Great King's high functionaries in Hattusa:

> Your messenger which you have sent to Hatti, and the presents which you have had conveyed to the Great Men are quite inadequate…. Did I not write to you in these terms: 'Send to the Chief of the Tablets a gift of outstanding quality'? So why have you not shown him the respect to which he is due by sending him such a gift? Why have you acted thus?[9]

The viceroy concluded his letter by reminding the chastized vassal of the punishment suffered by his representatives on a previous occasion when he had dared send them to his overlord with gifts which fell short of expectations. The warning was clear: 'Do not take it into your head to act in this manner a second time!'

Yet even greater cause for concern was the vassal's apparent failure to fulfil his military obligations. Ugarit appears never to have been a militarily strong state, in spite of its wealth, and had already on previous occasions sought ways to avoid providing troops for the Great King's army. Thus Ibiranu's father, Ammishtamru II (1260–1230), had paid his overlord Tudhaliya IV the enormous sum of 50 gold minas, to obtain exemption from contributing troops and chariots to the Hittite campaign against Assyria.[10] Fresh demands for troops had come in Ibiranu's reign, and the new king's reluctance to supply them[11] had prompted a review of his entire defence force by officials from Carchemish, as we learn from a letter sent to him by the viceroy[12]

Some time after this, Ibiranu again received a demand for troops. This time he did respond, but in a totally unsatisfactory way. The viceroy angrily wrote back to him, accusing him of providing false information and of dispatching second-rate troops and chariot horses in poor condition:

> In your letter you claim: 'My expeditionary troops are stationed in Mukish.' In fact they are *not* stationed there! They are in the town of Apsuna![13] And as for the chariot force you sent me, the charioteers are of inferior quality and their horses half-starved![14]

The viceroy went on to accuse his vassal of retaining his best troops in his own country. His accusation was probably justified. Ugarit may not have been the only Syrian vassal state to keep its prime forces at home for its own security, despite the demands of its overlord. Indeed the Ugaritic king's retention of such forces for the defence of his land may well reflect a loss of confidence by more than one Syrian vassal ruler in their overlord's or his viceroy's ability to protect them against the enemies that threatened them by both land and sea. In this context Ugarit's ruler received a letter from the Assyrian king, Tukulti-Ninurta I, reporting the devastating defeat which the Assyrians had recently inflicted upon a Hittite army in northern Mesopotamia.[15] The letter may well have been intended to persuade Ugarit to sever its ties with Hatti, as a now enfeebled kingdom, in order to realign itself with Assyria, the potential new overlord in the region.[16]

But there is another side to the letters found in Ugarit. A number of them deal not with military and political matters but rather indicate regular activity of a peaceful commercial nature between the local Syrian states, activity which extended on at least one occasion into Anatolia. Thus, in a letter to Ammurapi, the last known king of Ugarit, the ruler of the southern Anatolian kingdom Tarhuntassa referred to goods which he had sent to Ugarit, and followed this up with a request that Ammurapi send him goods in return.[17] In another letter the king of Amurru complained to his Ugaritic counterpart about a delay in the delivery of a consignment of steatite after a deal had apparently been concluded:

> Why do you retain the steatite, without Addu-mashir being able to take delivery? Will your people provide transport of it? They will be neither my subjects nor my boat who will deliver it! Now, my lord, let Addu-mashir go: let him take the steatite, so that the houses of the king, your brother, may be repaired. For the moment the houses are thus without steatite.[18]

Letters exchanged between the kings of Ugarit and Sidon, and the king of Beirut and a high official in Ugarit, testify to close, cordial relations between the Levantine coastal states in the Bronze Age's final decades.[19] And Ugarit seems also to have had close links with Emar on the Euphrates. Regular commercial interaction between the two states is reflected in the establishment of a Ugaritic trading office in Emar early in the twelfth century, where Dagan-belu was installed as Ugarit's representative and manager of its trading operations. From Emar he wrote to Shipti-Ba'al, agent and husband of the daughter of the Ugaritic king Ammurapi, assuring him that all was well, asking for news from home, and sending along with his messenger some plants for Shipti-Ba'al. In return he asked that if a messenger were to come from Shipti-Ba'al he would be grateful if the messenger could bring with him some oil and a large linen garment of good quality, for Dagan-belu's own use.[20] Dagan-belu wrote also to Urtenu, the dignitary in whose house the archive with which we are dealing was discovered,

requesting that he send his son Aziltu to Emar with further items for the letter-writer—alum-stone, blue wool and a garment of woven linen.[21]

As Bordreuil comments, these letters display in full light the high degree of 'cosmopolitanism' that characterized the world of Ugarit and its neighbours in these final decades. A network of commercial activity operated throughout the entire Syro-Palestinian region, with commercial routes passing through numerous market towns as well as the major urban centres.[22] While it may be dangerous to generalize, the level of commercial activity seems to have been at least as high as it had been in earlier times, if nor higher. Moreover, we hear virtually nothing in these letters of the perils of merchant travel, from either human agency or natural forces. This is somewhat surprising when we reflect that in earlier documents like the Amarna letters such perils seem to have been endemic to the region. Of course, this could be a matter of the accident of survival rather than a true reflection of the state of affairs. If anything, we might have expected an increase in criminal activity directed against merchant enterprises in this later period corresponding to an apparent decline in the great powers' control over the regions which were subject to them.

What is also noteworthy is the almost total absence in the Urtenu archive of explicit references to any approaching catastrophes. As Arnaud comments, there is nothing to warn us that we are in a world on the edge of annihilation.[23] By and large it is business as usual, in much the same way that the Linear B tablets of Mycenaean Pylos give the impression of 'business as usual' up to the palace's very last days. There is just an occasional hint of the threats that lay ahead. Thus a letter sent by the Hittite Great King to a Ugaritic king, probably Ammurapi, expressed concern about a group described as 'the people of Shikila who live on boats'. An Ugaritic citizen called Ibdandushu had been captured by the Shikila, but had subsequently been released or had escaped his captivity. The letter requested that Ibdandushu be sent to Hatti for interrogation about these people, with the promise that he would be returned safely to Ugarit.[24]

The Shikila are almost certainly to be identified with the Shekels, who figured amongst the massed population groups referred to by Ramesses III as the Sea Peoples. If so, this letter provides us with our first reference to one of the enemy forces who attacked and destroyed the cities of Ugarit at the kingdom's end.[25] Hattusa's concern at the presence of Shikila boat people on the eastern Mediterranean coast was well justified. But by this time there was little either the Great King or his viceroys could do to counter the threats posed by such groups to his vassal territories. Ammurapi received ominous reports from his coast-watchers of ships appearing on the horizon, undoubtedly with hostile intent. He sent an urgent dispatch to the viceroy at Carchemish pleading for assistance against a threatened seaborne invasion. The viceroy had nothing to offer but advice:

> As for what you have written to me: 'Ships of the enemy have been seen at sea!' Well, you must remain firm. Indeed for your part, where are your

> troops, your chariots stationed? Are they not stationed near you? No? Behind the enemy, who press upon you? Surround your towns with ramparts. Have your troops and chariots enter there, and await the enemy with great resolution![26]

Ammurapi was left in no doubt that he had to rely on his own resources in protecting his land against the enemy. Indeed, he may already have been aware of this, and we can the more readily understand why Ugarit had decided to keep its elite troops for its own defence, in spite of the viceroy's rebuke to its king for failing to fulfil his military obligations to his overlord.

But it may not have failed entirely. If we are to believe a claim made by Ammurapi in a letter to his counterpart in Alasiya, Ugarit's defence cap ability had been seriously weakened by the deployment of a substantial part of its forces elsewhere in Hittite territory, leaving it vulnerable to enemy attack. The enemy was quick to exploit the situation. Thus, when the Alasiyan king wrote to Ammurapi begging for assistance against the forces now attacking his own land, the latter was in no position to give a favourable response:

> My father, behold, the enemy's ships came (here) my cities(?) were burned, and they did evil things in my country. Does not my father know that all my troops and chariots(?) are in the Land of Hatti, and all my ships are in the Land of Lukka?…Thus, the country is abandoned to itself. May my father know it: the seven ships of the enemy that came here inflicted much damage upon us.[27]

The letter was found in the house of Rapanu. It was now clearly a case of every kingdom for itself.

Severe food shortages, whether due to drought, lack of manpower to work the fields, or enemy devastation of foodlands, may also have been taking their toll. Thus another letter from the Rapanu archive declared:

> The gates of the house are sealed. Since there is famine in your house, we will starve to death. If you do not hasten to come we will starve to death. A living soul of your country you will no longer see.[28]

The situation was exacerbated by demands from Hatti, itself now probably in the grip of famine, for grain consignments from the Syrian states—very likely to compensate for the loss of grain shipments from Egypt due to the activities of enemy naval forces in the eastern Mediterranean. A particular note of urgency was sounded in a letter sent from the Hittite court to the Ugaritic king, either Niqmaddu III or Ammurapi (his name is not preserved in the text), demanding a ship and crew for the transport of 2,000 *kor* of grain (*circa* 450 tonnes) from Mukish to Ura:

> And so (the city) Ura (acted(?)) in such a way…and they have saved the food for His Majesty. His Majesty has shown them 2000 *kor* of grain coming from Mukish. You must furnish them with a large ship and a crew, and they must transport this grain to their country. They will carry it in one or two shipments. You must not detain their ship![29]

The letter stressed the need for the Ugaritic king to act without delay.

End of an era

These last letters from Ugarit bring us to the end of our survey of Late Bronze Age correspondence. The picture they present serves in several respects as a microcosm of conditions in general in many parts of the Near Eastern and Aegean worlds in the late thirteenth to the early twelfth century. These are worlds of increasing insecurity and instability. Major and regional palace and administrative centres, whole kingdoms great and small, local urban and agricultural communities were becoming ever more vulnerable to attack by marauding enemy forces, some by land, some from the sea. Appeals for assistance against these forces, directed to an overlord or to kindred neighbouring states, were ignored or rejected. Those to whom the appeals were made may have had no choice but to respond thus, for they themselves were often the victims of the same forces. There was disruption of supply routes; there were increasing food shortages. And everywhere populations were on the move.

Like many other centres of Late Bronze Age civilization, Ugarit did not survive the forces of disruption and destruction which we have fleetingly glimpsed in the last letters from its archives. Its capital, on the site of modern Ras Shamra, was looted and abandoned. This was 'the total and definitive end of Ugarit; its political and social structures vanished and there was no longer a state at this spot along the Syrian coast'.[30] To similar forces the central Anatolian kingdom of Hatti succumbed. Hatti's capital was abandoned and destroyed. The empire over which it ruled crumbled along with it. Egypt too lost its Asiatic empire. Though it survived the upheavals which destroyed many of its contemporaries, the pharaonic kingdom would never again regain its status as a major international power. In Syria relics of the Hittite empire were to persist in modified form for perhaps another 500 years, in the so-called neo-Hittite kingdoms. A number of states along the Syrian coast, notably the Phoenician kingdoms of Byblos, Tyre and Sidon, would also survive the end of the Bronze Age and enjoy a flourishing new phase in the early Iron Age. But in many respects the geo-political face of the Near Eastern world west of the Euphrates was to change dramatically in the centuries that followed the demise of the Late Bronze Age kingdoms.

East of the Euphrates were two Bronze Age kingdoms whose stories had not yet run their course. Largely untouched by the upheavals which engulfed its western neighbours, Assyria would once more emerge from relative obscurity to

become the supreme power of the Near Eastern region. Babylon too would rise again. In its turn, it too would assume the mantle of supremacy in the Near East once Assyria's brilliant and often brutal dominance of the region had been finally, abruptly and irrevocably ended.

But that is a tale for another time.

Notes

1 See Bryce (1998:355–6, 363–4, 364–6), with refs.
2 See Bryce (1998:370–1), with refs.
3 He was in fact one of the high-ranking officials of Hatti appointed by the Hittite king as a 'surrogate son'. See Beckman (1992:47), Bryce (2002: 27–8).
4 RS 17.247=*PRU IV* 191. Also trans. Beckman (1996:121 no. 21). See further on this episode Klengel (1992:145).
5 Bordreuil (1991).
6 Prior to the 1994 find, twenty-two tablets had been unearthed during the course of three excavations conducted between 1986 and 1992. For preliminary notes on these, see Bordreuil and Pardee (1995). See also Singer (2000: 21–4). The post-1973 material has yet to be published.
7 See Bordreuil and Pardee (1995:31, 32).
8 See Beckman (1992:46).
9 RS 34.136 (Malbran-Labat 1991, no. 7:29–30), 5–21.
10 RS 17.059=*PRU IV:* 150–1.
11 RS 20.237; see Nougayrol *et al*. (1968:102–4).
12 RS 17.289=*PRU IV* 192.
13 A city on Ugarit's northern frontier, and thus still under the Ugaritic king's immediate control, rather than in Mukish, which lay to Ugarit's north.
14 RS 34.143 (Malbran-Labat 1991, no. 6:27–8) 5–13.
15 RS 34.165, ed. Lackenbacher (1982; 1991:90–100). See Singer (1985), Bryce (1998:350–2).
16 Cf. Singer (2000:22).
17 RS 34.139 (Malbran-Labat 1991, no. 14:41–2).
18 RS 34.135 (Malbran-Labat 1991, no. 17:46–8, 8–19).
19 RS 34.149 and RS 34.137 (Arnaud 1991b, nos. 38 and 37, respectively, pp. 79–81).
20 RS [Varia 26] (Arnaud 1991a, no. 30:66–7).
21 RS 34.134 (Arnaud 1991a, no. 30:68–70).
22 Bordreuil (1991:14).
23 Arnaud (1991a: 65).
24 RS 34.129 (Malbran-Labat 1991, no. 12:38–40). See also Dietrich and Loretz (1978).
25 Thus Singer (2000:24).
26 RS L1 8–28=Nougayrol *et al*. (1968:85–6, no. 23).
27 RS 20.238=Nougayrol *et al*. (1968:87–9, no. 24), trans. Astour (1965:255).
28 RS 34.152, 9–14, trans. Singer (2000:24).

29 RS 20.212, 17’-26’, adapted from trans. by Heltzer (1977:209). For the full text, see Nougayrol *et al*. (1968, no. 33:105–7). Cf. RS 20.141 B (op. cit., no. 34, 107–8), RS 26.158 (op. cit., no. 171, 323–4).

30 Yon (1992:111). For evidence of fighting throughout the city, see Yon (1992: 117).

APPENDIX: THE AMARNA LETTERS

> It is in the Amarna period that we observe for the first time the Great Powers of the entire Near East, from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf, interacting among themselves, engaged in regular dynastic, commercial and strategic relations. The mechanism for the political management of this interconnected set of relationships was Amarna diplomacy, a diplomatic regime consisting of rules, conventions, procedures and institutions governing the representation of and the communication and negotiation between Great Kings.[1]

The site now known as Amarna lies on the east bank of the Nile, some 300 kilometres south of Cairo. It was here, in 1887, that a peasant woman came across a quantity of inscribed clay tablets while fossicking in the ruins of the site later identified as Akhetaten, the city built by Akhenaten. Clandestine diggings by members of the local population brought more tablets to light, with further discoveries being made during the course of the earliest official excavations on the site. The total number of tablets found is unknown since some were secretly sold off to private buyers soon after their discovery; 382 tablets, representing perhaps 75 per cent (or more) of the original number discovered, are known today. The find-spot of the great majority of these tablets is now called Building 19. Its original name is rather more evocative: The House of the Letters of the Pharaoh—Life, Prosperity, Health.' The pharaoh's foreign office archive was located here.

Of the tablets, 350 contain letters either addressed to the pharaoh or composed by him in collaboration with his chief advisers.[2] Several gift inventories dispatched to a particular addressee are included in this number.[3] The letters are divided into two main categories:

- those which the pharaoh exchanged with foreign rulers, the kings of Hatti, Babylon, Mitanni, Assyria, Arzawa and Alasiya;
- by far the larger category, communications sent from (and occasiona lly to) the pharaoh's vassal rulers in Syria-Palestine.

Some forty of these rulers figure in the Amarna correspondence. The remaining thirty-two tablets consist of syllabaries, lexical lists and mythological texts. Their scholarly and literary character suggests the presence of a small cuneiform scribal school *(eduba)* in the royal capital.[4]

With the exception of two pieces of correspondence in Hittite (*EA* 31–2), one in Assyrian (*EA* 15) and one in Hurrian (*EA* 24), the Amarna letters are written in Akkadian (or a form of it), the international *lingua franca* of the Late Bronze Age. Unfortunately, it is often a very difficult form of Akkadian. As Liverani remarks, the language of the letters is full of rhetorical questions, metaphors, paradoxes and other stylistic devices, which allows in different cases for different, even opposed, interpretations.[5] Aside from this, there are the problems frequently posed by translation into a language which is not the translator's own. Many uncertainties and obscurities in the letters may arise simply from the fact that the scribes who wrote them were not native speakers of Akkadian (with the obvious exception of those from the Akkadian-speaking kingdoms of Babylon and Assyria) and may sometimes have had difficulties in conveying in this language the precise meaning and nuances of their master's original words.

Moreover, in the Syro-Palestinian correspondence the problems we have in comprehending and correctly interpreting what the letters say are further compounded by the scribes' use of archaisms, regional dialectical variations, hybrid Akkadian-Canaanite forms and straight-out 'Canaanitisms'. The local scribes developed what has been called a 'scholastic and diplomatic jargon',[6] a 'Canaanized pidgin',[7] which poses its own specific challenges even apart from the general problems which jargon in any context often entails for readers unfamiliar with it. All this we need to bear in mind in our attempts to reconstruct the history of the Amarna period. The letters provide much of the information on which such a reconstruction must be based. But this information is often fragmentary, and even when reasonably complete is capable of being read and interpreted in different ways.

The archive covers at most a period of thirty years,[8] a shorter period depending on whether and how long a co-regency existed between Amenhotep III and his son Amenhotep IV/Akhenaten. The earliest letters date to the last years of Amenhotep III (from perhaps his thirtieth year onwards) and were presumably taken from Thebes to Akhetaten after the relocation of the Egyptian royal seat there. The latest may date to the very early years of Tutankhamun, no later than year three of his reign, when Akhetaten was abandoned and the new pharaoh went to Memphis. Of the total of 350 letters, all but eleven consist of incoming mail addressed to the pharaoh by his foreign peers or his vassal rulers. The eleven pieces of outgoing correspondence consist of one letter addressed to the king of Arzawa in western Anatolia, two letters and an inventory of gifts for dispatch to the king of Babylonia, and seven letters intended for various vassal rulers in Syria-Palestine.

What was the actual status of the letters found in the Amarna archive? We might reasonably assume that many of those addressed to the pharaoh, both by

his royal brothers and by his vassals, were original documents which were subsequently translated into Egyptian by the pharaoh 's own scribes. Dr Reeves, however, notes that recent analysis of the fabric of the tablets suggests that a good proportion of the Amarna texts were not originals, but copies actually prepared in Egypt for internal circulation.[9] There must also have been an archive where Egyptian translations of the Akkadian originals were stored (at least the most important of them) for future reference and possible action. We have referred to Building 19, the 'House of the Letters of the Pharaoh', where most of the Amarna letters were found. This building was in fact part of a much larger complex housing the State Chancellery. Thus was created 'a day-to-day meeting ground, between the two cultures…between Egyptian literacy, on the one hand, and Mesopotamian-oriented cuneiform literacy on the other'.[10]

We have also to explain the presence in the Amarna archive of letters which actually emanated from the pharaoh and were addressed to foreign kings and vassal rulers. Why were they still in Egypt? Three possibilities suggest themselves: they were drafts of the final versions of letters that were actually sent; they were copies of such letters (like *EA* 162, a copy of an ultimatum sent to the Amurrite ruler Aziru); they were originals which for some reason or other (perhaps simple oversight in some cases) never left Egypt. Parallels for at least the first two of these possibilities can be found in the archives of the Hittite capital Hattusa.

But then we have the most intriguing question of all. Why is it that the letters found in the archive are apparently the *only* ones to have been preserved at Amarna? What is it about them that has given them this special status? They must represent no more than a tiny fraction of the substantial volume of correspondence which passed between pharaoh and fellow kings and pharaoh and vassal rulers during the diplomatically vibrant Amarna age. Indeed, they themselves provide clear testimony of the regular traffic in written correspondence to and from the Egyptian court, in the references they make to many other letters of which no material trace survives. What has ensured the survival of this small and very disparate group of letters when so many other letters of the period have apparently been lost for all time?

The archive itself gives no clues as to why the letters belonging to it were gathered together, and why they and none of the others were preserved. Some of the letters, particularly those from foreign Great Kings, might well have been considered important enough to warrant preservation. But many other such letters which must have been equally important have disappeared. Some letters from vassal rulers were also worth keeping, primarily, perhaps, for the intelligence reports which they contained.[11] Yet other preserved letters deal with mere trivia. And there is little correlation between the number of letters sent by particular vassal states and the import ance of these states within the region as a whole. Indeed, the most voluminous correspondence emanated from Rib-Hadda, vassal ruler of Gubla, who plagued and wearied the pharaoh with his incessant requests and complaints.[12] To judge from what Rib-Hadda himself says, his

letters were almost entirely ignored, the pharaoh very rarely taking the trouble to respond to them. Yet these letters were preserved in the royal foreign archive in Akhetaten—where they far outnumbered the entire surviving corpus of the pharaoh's correspondence with his brother-kings. If Akhenaten was as wearied with Rib-Hadda as he makes out, why did he bother to keep so many of his letters when he apparently had no intention of answering them, and when so many other letters addressed to him were apparently discarded?

It is possible that the place where the Amarna archive was found served to some extent as a temporary repository for letters received from abroad until such time as they were translated into Egyptian and stored in permanent archives, perhaps with original and translation side by side. Some of the correspondence found in the archive may have been awaiting this process.[13] But the apparent arbitrariness of the collection makes it difficult to believe that the tablets which constituted it were deliberately brought together into a single assemblage. There appears to be no common denominator. We may have to think of a quite different scenario in attempting to explain not only the survival of this particular assemblage but also the randomness of its contents. The following hypothetical reconstruction offers but one of a number of possible explanations:

As we have noted, in the third year of the reign of Tutankhamun Akhetaten was abandoned for all time. In the city's very last days the palace's foreign office archives were ransacked. It was an officially sanctioned ransack, the purpose being to extract and preserve any documents considered to be of current and continuing significance, particularly within the context of the international diplomatic scene at the time. Some of the letters from the archive which contained the Great Kings' correspondence may have been kept for this reason and relocated in Memphis—letters now lost to us. Other letters from the archive were relegated to a discard pile if adjudged to be of no further relevance or value. The vassal archive was treated in the same way, rejected items being added to the same pile. Through the vagaries of chance, it was the discard pile that survived. What is today the most important collection of international correspondence of the entire Bronze Age was to remain concealed here for more than 2,000 years, until it was eventually brought to light by the humblest of discoverers—a peasant woman digging through the rubble of the once great city of the Aten.

Notes

1 Cohen and Westbrook (2000:4).

2 The most authoritative edition of the Amarna letters is that of Moran (1992). For a recent detailed commentary on the letters, see Giles (1997), with translations of selected letters supplied by A.B.Knapp.

3 *EA* 14, 22, 25.

4 See Artzi (1990:140). These texts are the subject of a study by Izre'el (1997).

5 Liverani (1998:387), with examples.

6 See Albright (1975:99), who points out that the would-be interpreter of the texts must be a specialist in Hebrew and Ugaritic as well as in Akkadian.

7 See Rainey (1995:109–10).

8 On the chronology of the letters and the means of determining it, see Albright (1975:99–100).

9 Reeves (2001:62–3).

10 Artzi (1990:140). Moran (1992:xvi) suggests that the name ‘House of the Letters of the Pharaoh’ might in fact refer not merely to a storage place for letters from abroad, but to a larger complex, the more extensive part of which was devoted to affairs of state conducted in the Egyptian language.

11 For a detailed treatment of the references in the Amarna letters to intelligence reports, especially from the pharaoh’s Syro-Palestinian vassals, see Cohen (2000), who notes (p. 97) that at least thirty-eight out of the 329 documents in the vassal corpus, and two items in the Great King file, contain intelligence references.

12 Some sixty-seven or sixty-eight letters were written either by (the great majority) or to Rib-Hadda.

13 Cf. Moran (1992:xvii–xviii).

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